



Building Peace

Practical Innovations from USIP

Building Peace no. 2 March 2012

Empowering Local Peacebuilders

Strategies for Effective Engagement of Local Actors
in Peace Operations





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Problem Identified

- *Peacebuilding operations in conflict and post-conflict societies often undermine local capacity, ownership, and sustainability. The acknowledged remedy is to empower local actors to take the lead in planning and implementing programs, but few empowerment strategies that work in practice have been documented and explained.*

Action Taken

- *Several organizations have reconfigured empowerment techniques traditionally used for peacetime development to work in societies emerging from conflict.*
- *Local actors have seized the chance presented by these new approaches to develop and implement their own creative solutions to conflict. Local ownership has in turn enabled the integration of other sectors of society and government into peacebuilding activities.*

Lessons Learned

- *Focus on facilitating processes instead of trying to achieve specific outcomes. Successful interventions help participants open channels to defend their own interests, with the participants determining the final decisions and outcomes.*
- *Design programs to promote learning rather than to yield specific results. Effective programs create opportunities for participants to seek out and absorb knowledge critical to good decision making.*
- *Don't be deflected by political pressures. Even well-known empowerment principles (such as respecting local counterparts) can be sidelined if interveners do not prioritize them above the kinds of political pressures typically encountered in conflict zones.*



The full text of this report is available at
<http://www.usip.org/publications/empowering-local-peacebuilders>

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Main cover photo: Data collectors conduct a women's focus group in the Niger Delta as part of a 2008 participatory stakeholder evaluation of community development agreements. Photograph by Paulinus Okoro. Used with permission by the Africa Centre for Corporate Responsibility.

Photo on page 5: Howard Wolpe, in Bakavu in eastern DRC, where he was attending a training for provincial and military faction leaders in Congo. Photograph by Michel Kassa. Used with permission by Michael Kassa.

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The Building Peace series reports on innovative work by USIP that has practical applications for peacemakers and peacebuilders. The goal is to get useful knowledge into the hands of practitioners promptly. Some of the work reported in Building Peace is recent, some is ongoing. All of it has been tested, usually in the field, but this is work in progress and feedback is warmly welcomed. Please send all comments on this report to Nadia Gerspacher, a senior program officer in USIP's Academy of International Conflict Management and Peacemaking, at ngerspacher@usip.org.

In memory of one of the leaders in the field of capacity building
for conflict management, Howard Wolpe.
The results of his innovative strategies and practices
can be seen in many places across the world.



Introduction

A. Heather Coyne

Capacity building, local ownership, and sustainability—loosely captured in the almost cliché term of “empowerment”—have long been core tenets for engaging local actors in traditional development programming. These concepts have received prominence in the discussion of interventions to prevent or resolve conflict and to rebuild societies emerging from conflict. Across the spectrum of organizations involved in such peace operations, from nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to civilian government agencies to the military, it is virtually impossible to find anyone who does not claim that these concepts are central to the design and implementation—and success—of interventions. But for all the attention paid to the concepts of empowerment, the record of successfully integrating them into interventions in conflict zones is distressingly poor.

In many cases, that failure is due to the unique characteristics of conflict operations: conflict environments are not conducive to traditional empowerment approaches; agencies leading conflict operations often lack experience with empowerment principles; and the intense scrutiny of highly politicized operations creates intense pressure for immediate results that undermines empowerment strategies.

In large part, however, the failure to integrate empowerment into interventions is due not to a lack of appreciation of the principles or to the constraints of working in conflict zones, but simply to a lack of understanding of how to put them into practice. How can interveners engage local actors in conflict zones in ways that promote ownership, capacity building, and sustainability? What are the techniques for selecting participants, establishing trust, encouraging awareness of common interests, building collaborative networks, and facilitating participation in decision-making processes, given the challenges and goals of peace operations? The lack of practical guidelines is compounded by an incentive structure that rewards “disempowering” activities, so even where good strategies are known, they often are not adopted.

This Building Peace report spotlights practical strategies for engaging local actors—especially strategies that address the unique constraints of conflict operations. By examining a series of case studies on creative engagement methodologies that seek to empower local actors, this report draws out common themes and elements of effective engagement. Although all practitioners know that interventions must be designed for a specific context, basic elements—as well as respect for these elements in incentive

structures—can be incorporated into a variety of interventions. Such inclusion will strengthen the ability of interventions to free the potential of local actors to drive, manage, and sustain their own solutions to conflict.

The Challenge of Effective Engagement

The operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have highlighted the weaknesses in engagement methodologies and practice. It is a matter of argument whether international interveners have employed operations effectively even in traditional development contexts, but results have been undeniably poor in Iraq and Afghanistan. In the vast majority of activities in these counties, programming has not promoted local ownership, capacity, or sustainability but rather the reverse. The consequent toll on resources, credibility, and public support for operations has threatened the potential for success. Looking back at other peace operations (a broad term that includes conflict management, peacemaking, and stability and reconstruction efforts), one can see similar shortcomings.

The ineffectiveness of peace operations is partly explained by the dynamics of working in conflict zones. A fundamental characteristic of empowerment is consultation. But reliance on consultation is challenging in situations where interaction or association with international interveners puts participants in danger. In addition, in situations where power structures are violently contested, empowerment of local actors risks strengthening one warring party to the detriment of another, feeding conflict, with the intervention itself becoming another resource over which to fight.

Empowerment concepts have proven difficult for certain organizational cultures—particularly the military—to adopt and implement. Peace operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, and earlier interventions in the Balkans and elsewhere, have relied heavily on military force, with military actors taking the lead even on economic and social development activities. This dependence on military force has put empowerment at risk because military organizational culture is often at odds with the requirements of capacity building, local ownership, and sustainability. Military organizations value swift action and results, values that conflict with the need to build processes and to allow for individual and institutional learning over time. The U.S. military in particular encourages “can do” and “take charge” attitudes. A can do attitude dictates finding ways to achieve specified outcomes, often to the detriment of longer-term efforts to build local support and decision-making processes, whereas a take charge attitude can interrupt local leadership and undermine local ownership when military personnel strive to get things done “their way.”

This mindset is not limited to the military; it is shared by civilian agencies eager for immediate, reportable results in post-conflict reconstruction operations. Many agencies involved in peacekeeping efforts have extensive relevant subject matter expertise but

less familiarity with the imperatives of sustainable knowledge transfer. Cast in the role of advisers and trainers, interveners often fall back on what they know best: active involvement in shaping and directing policy outcomes at the expense of capacity building.

Even those with extensive expertise in development and knowledge transfer—and who should know better—feel the pressure in highly politicized operations to show instant, easily visible progress. This pressure to show results is not a bad thing in itself; the problem is pressure to show more results than can be achieved or results that are ultimately counterproductive. For example, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) faced demands to change its traditional operating procedures to accommodate the political exigencies of Iraq and Afghanistan and passed those pressures on to its implementing partners. The scrutiny and pressure affected the ability of organizations to conduct programming that supports local empowerment, with amateurs and experts alike forced to short-circuit time-proven approaches and principles. These pressures are not confined to Afghanistan and Iraq. Even outside such highly politicized, high-pressure environments, conflict-related programming—including conflict management, development, human rights, and democracy initiatives—struggles to avoid the temptation of an excessive emphasis on delivering speedy, superficially quantifiable results at the expense of sustainable empowerment.



Imposing solutions: U.S. soldiers in Baghdad explain a plan for relocating displaced persons. Photograph by A. Heather Coyne, 2003. Used with permission by A. Heather Coyne.

Toward More Effective Engagement

Practitioners could debate endlessly whether the failures in effective engagement are attributable to circumstances, organizational culture, or political will. But another, more practical factor is at work that practitioners can more constructively address: how does one actually engage effectively? How does one foster processes and dynamics that will allow local actors to make and sustain their own decisions? Given the challenges of conflict environments, the lack of familiarity of some organizations with empowerment principles, and the constraints of the politicized operations, are there practical strategies that practitioners can adopt to advance empowerment?

Plenty of information is available on how *not* to engage and what pitfalls to avoid; for example, “Don’t assume that if you build it, they will come.” “Don’t sway local prioritization by indicating which types of projects you want to fund.” “Don’t assume that agreement with your proposal indicates commitment.” Much less exists in the way of concrete guidance on *how to* engage local actors in ways that promote empowerment.

This Building Peace report attempts to move the debate beyond a recitation of the importance of empowerment by exploring practical methodologies for capacity building, local ownership, and sustainability. It includes case studies that describe particular methods of engagement, documenting programmatic approaches for selecting participants, establishing trust, encouraging awareness of common interests, building relationships and collaborative networks, and facilitating participation in—and ownership of—decision-making processes. The cases presented demonstrate techniques to integrate local actors into every phase of a project, from initial conception to planning, implementation, and evaluation.

This report does not provide an exhaustive list of approaches; the five cases featured here are illustrative of the variety of engagement techniques that build capacity, ownership, and sustainability. The cases were selected based on each implementer’s conscious decision to prioritize active leadership of local actors above any other factors such as speed, efficiency, or reach of the project. These implementers articulated a methodology for deliberate empowerment and can trace outcomes and effects back to the engagement techniques. Although all the cases use a combination of methods to empower local actors, each case illustrates a key engagement methodology, summarized below. The case studies are intended not to assess the overall impact or success of the initiative but to describe approaches to engagement that build local ownership.

The cases are mostly limited to a particular type of engagement: that of international third parties bringing dedicated resources for social projects. It is hoped that this

description of a few creative strategies will inspire further innovation for a wider range of initiative types, including training, mentoring, and advising, technical assistance, and grant making.

Case Study 1. Getting the Right People into the Room: The Burundi Leadership Training Program. Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

Howard Wolpe and Steve McDonald examine the strategic selection and recruitment of participants to develop buy-in to an initiative from the start as well as to ensure that participants came to the program with the mindset necessary for it to succeed. The goal of the Woodrow Wilson Center's Burundi project was to build the collaborative capacity of and trust between key leaders who had the ability to direct or influence Burundi's recovery and democratic transition, helping to create a network that could work together across ethnic and political divides.

Case Study 2. Research-Based Dialogue: Guatemalan Dialogue on Security Sector Reform. Interpeace

Bernardo Arévalo de León presents a research-based dialogue approach to creating an environment that allows for relationship building and for common interests to emerge. Immediately after the civil war, the environment in Guatemala was antithetical to a traditional dialogue between stakeholders. Interpeace organized a research project on security sector reform that created a new, neutral space in society where constructive engagement between the parties could take place.

Case Study 3. Mobilizing Community Decision Making: The Iraq Community Action Program. ACDI/VOCA

Sally Iadarola and Lindsey Jones describe a community mobilization process that enables citizens to prioritize, select, and implement infrastructure projects to address underlying drivers of conflict. Using local staff as mobilizers and involving local leaders and government officials throughout the process, the Iraq Community Action Program (ICAP) engages Iraqi communities in a decision-making process on what they can do for themselves, building on their own strengths and contributing their own resources. Outside support, although necessary, is structured in a way that does not dominate the process.

“Creative strategies will inspire further innovation.”

Case Study 4. Building Collaborative Networks: Independent Radio Network in Sierra Leone. Search for Common Ground

Ambrose James tells the story of the evolution of a successful, collaborative network of local radio stations through the facilitation and gradual transfer of capacity. Search for Common Ground supported the development of the network not through a directive intervention but through continual encouragement, facilitation of communication among members, and careful application of resources otherwise inaccessible to the nascent group.

Unlike the other case studies, this example does not demonstrate a formalized, articulated methodology as much as it validates a style of interaction—mostly hands-off, not directive, but continuous engagement with and encouragement of an organic development process driven by local actors.

Case Study 5. Participatory Stakeholder Evaluation: Evaluation of the Chevron, State Government, and Community Compacts in the Niger Delta. Consensus Building Institute

David Plumb presents a participatory stakeholder evaluation designed to build the capacity of stakeholders to shape and participate in decision making on community development funds provided by Chevron Nigeria Ltd. The Consensus Building Institute used a highly participatory approach in which stakeholders were directly involved in and responsible for the design and implementation of the evaluation as well as the analysis of results.

This Building Peace report also includes six feature boxes highlighting creative techniques for engagement:

- *A Co-analysis Approach.* A co-analysis approach can enhance a training and mentoring strategy in a fragile state.
- *Culturally Sensitive Engagement.* The Bougainville Peace Monitoring Group built trust through music in the aftermath of civil war in Papua New Guinea.
- *Peer Mentoring.* The Center for Entrepreneurship and Executive Development provides local mentors to train entrepreneurs in post-conflict areas of Southeast Europe.
- *The Exchange of Skills.* The United States Institute of Peace's (USIP) conflict management training program in Pakistan fostered an environment in which local actors could draw on expertise from external actors.

- *Adversarial Capacity Building.* Coalition forces in Iraq used routine interactions with local actors to strengthen local capacity to deal with authorities and create a “safe space” for local actors to experiment with new roles and skills.
- *The Participatory Strategic Planning Index.* RTI International’s index is a tool for evaluating the level of local participation in an initiative.

This collection of cases presents an opportunity to identify common themes and elements that characterize effective engagement. This Building Peace report thus summarizes themes for practitioners to incorporate into future intervention design. All the programs presented here are characterized by an emphasis on process over products: they enable the development of institutions and relationships—over appropriate time frames—rather than trying to produce a predetermined result. Local actors shape the outcome and often determine the nature of any final product themselves. The studies also illustrate the importance of investment in learning by participants, building respectful partnerships, and giving primacy to the local context.

Toward More Effective Institutions

Most of the cases presented here reflect an institutional commitment to the principles of empowerment by the organizations behind the interventions. The methodologies described were not ad hoc tactics but emerged out of long experience and gradual recognition and incorporation of strategies that enhance those principles. Each intervention was designed consciously and specifically to draw out local leadership or an opportunity was capitalized on by individuals who were well trained in the principles and applied them as a matter of course.

There is a reason for this. Sustainable approaches that build local ownership and capacity are longer, harder, and less tangible in their results than short-term, unsustainable approaches. Therefore, an organizational mindset and structure are required that accept this fact; interveners must be willing to provide the sustained—and restrained—support necessary to let the process reach its potential.

This does not mean that individuals cannot use empowerment strategies even if their organizations do not fully grasp or adhere to empowerment principles. It does mean, though, that without an institutional commitment behind them, practitioners are likely to encounter resistance, impatience, or confusion about what they are achieving. They risk being hijacked or pressured to speed up or take more “active” roles. Ultimately, effective empowerment depends not only on the individuals incorporating or inventing

“All the programs presented here are characterized by an emphasis on process over products”

engagement strategies, but also on their home organizations changing the way they incentivize, measure, and judge success.

Taking this argument further, success in peace operations depends on changing the mindset behind interventions. Although the debate on whether and how to undertake major stabilization and reconstruction operations continues, most practitioners would agree that intervention in conflict zones to promote governance, development, and reconciliation is likely to be a standard feature of foreign policy in the foreseeable future. Governments are therefore devoting more attention to building their own capacity to conduct such operations. But these efforts tend to focus on the substance of state building rather than on techniques for facilitating locally owned and managed processes. Instead of training personnel to reform institutions and make new policy for conflict countries, efforts should be focused on training interveners to be catalysts for change. Intervenors should be advisers who can facilitate processes in which local actors take responsibility for changing their own systems in ways that they define themselves; effectively build coalitions with other like-minded people; take advantage of fair, inclusive forums to debate and pursue competing agendas; and draw on outside expertise and best practices because they themselves see the value in using and refining that knowledge for their own purposes. The role of intervenors in peace operations should not be to lead; it should be to empower the local population take the lead.

Case Study 1

Getting the Right People into the Room

The Burundi Leadership Training Program

Howard Wolpe and Steve McDonald

Burundi offers a graphic illustration of a country whose leaders have, for decades, seen themselves in the grip of a life-and-death struggle. A history of intercommunal massacres, including genocide, combined with the postindependence domination of a subset of the Tutsi minority over the majority Hutu population, have produced deep-seated suspicions and mistrust among elites. Moreover, the country must contend not only with an ethnically polarized urban leadership class, but also with a huge gulf between the country's "political class" and a deeply alienated, largely rural, population.¹

At the onset of the three-year political transition established by the Arusha Peace Accord of August 2000, all four of the key political imperatives for a sustainable Burundian peace and successful postwar reconstruction—a new interdependence-affirming paradigm, trust among key players, cooperative political rhetoric, and consensus on the rules of the game—were largely absent. Although there were plentiful examples of grassroots reconciliation, at the leadership level there was little sense of common ground among Tutsi, Hutu, and Twa. Trusting interethnic relationships were the exception rather than the norm; notwithstanding their formal acceptance of power-sharing arrangements negotiated in Arusha and afterward, the principal parties seemed to agree that the rules governing the management of their interactions were exceedingly fragile.

Under the direction of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and with the support of the World Bank's Post-Conflict Fund and supplementary assistance from USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives, the British Department for International Development and the European Community, the Burundi Leadership Training Program (BLTP) was designed and established to assist in Burundi's fragile peace process. The capacity-building program, originally funded for eighteen months, was a national training program explicitly designed to build a cohesive, sustainable network of leaders who could work together across all ethnic and political divides in order to advance Burundi's reconstruction. Rather than focusing on the acquisition of technical skills, as other capacity-building programs tend to do, this program sought to build the "collaborative capacity" of leaders. BLTP workshops featured training in interest-based negotiations, communications, mediation, conflict analysis, strategic planning, and the management of organizational change.

The Strategic Challenge

The key to building collaborative capacity—and the primary challenge for the Wilson Center and its local partner, the BLTP—is to get the right people into the room, that is, key leaders within all social and institutional sectors who, by virtue of their formal roles or their informal influence, could strategically impact, for better or worse, the course of democratization and development.

Sometimes a single country or an international institution such as the United Nations or the World Bank will have sufficient leverage to secure the participation of key leaders. In other situations, a particularly credible neutral person or institution within the society may kick-start the process. On occasion, however, it may be nearly impossible to find a neutral third party, either within the country or within the international community, with sufficient credibility and gravitas.

At the same time, the process used to identify and recruit key leaders must be seen not as a process manipulated by external actors but as a process that is an accurate reflection of the views of the protagonists to the conflict. In Burundi, the training program came to be seen as “owned” by the indigenous parties and as a genuine partnership between the parties and the international team mounting the leadership training program. Without such local commitment, peacebuilding and conflict transformation efforts cannot be sustainable.

The Wilson Center Burundi project created a “strategic selection process” to get the right people into the room in a manner that built ownership over the training program by the parties and ensured that the selected leaders participated in the workshops, not to negotiate or posture, but to build their own capacities and relationships to move the process forward.

Securing Burundian Buy-In

Two methods were used to obtain the broadest possible Burundian buy-in to the project. First, the Wilson Center project managers held almost one hundred meetings over two months with Burundians from all political perspectives—government and civil society, as well as the military and rebel groups. The seriousness and credibility of the proposed venture were enhanced in Burundian eyes by the project director’s five-year involvement with the Burundian peace process as a special envoy, by the World Bank’s financial sponsorship of the initiative, and by the neutrality and stature of the implementing partner, the Washington-based Wilson Center. These consultative meetings resulted in the endorsement of the BLTP by virtually all Burundian stakeholders.

Second, two Burundians were brought into the project management team at the project's inception—both highly respected and trusted individuals who enjoyed the confidence of virtually all Burundian institutions and political factions and lent immediate credibility to the initiative. Independent consultant Eugene Nindorera, a former minister of human rights, brought to the project not only his considerable personal stature and access to all factional leaders, but also exceptional political instincts and an analytic grasp of Burundian political dynamics. BLTP office manager Fabien Nsengimana, a former teacher and civil servant with extensive experience in the office of the presidency, is, like Nindorera, one of the rare Burundians who has transcended his society's ethnic polarity and is accepted as an honest and trusted interlocutor by all.

Selecting Leaders Strategically

To achieve maximum possible impact in the shortest amount of time, the one hundred leaders who were initially invited to participate in this initiative were strategically selected. In the course of the project managers' meetings with a broad range of Burundian stakeholders, as described above, each institutional, faction, or constituency leader, after hearing a full explanation of the project and the workshop methodology, was requested to draw up his or her own list of leaders who he or she would most like to see involved in the first workshop of the training program. Members of the initial group were asked to nominate only persons who, by virtue of the positions they held or the influence they wielded in their respective groups, had the capacity to shape Burundi's future. Because of the need to address simultaneously not only the ethnic cleavage dividing Burundian elites but also the huge chasm between elites and the country's population, half the participants were drawn from the "political class"—the government and the political parties, the army, and all the rebel organizations—while the other half came from civil society (churches, women's organizations, academia, media, youth, labor unions, and the business community). The Wilson Center managers asked the initial group to suggest names of political elites and civil society leaders from across the political spectrum and to ensure an ethnic, geographic, and gender balance as well.

Members of the initial group were assured that their submissions would be treated confidentially, shared only with the management team. The final responsibility for participant selection would lie with the project managers, who would ensure that the composition of every workshop group satisfied the need for ethnic, regional, and gender balance as well as sectoral inclusivity. But the submissions would serve as an important guide as to who Burundians believed were most capable of significantly influencing their country's future. The project managers received a large number of responses to this request that which allowed them to draw up a database of almost four

*“ The key to bulding collaborative capacity . . .
is to get the right people into the room ”*

hundred persons. A quick perusal showed individuals who were named repeatedly as critical “players,” for better or worse. Included were some “spoilers,” individuals seen by the international community as complicit in past negative actions or resistant to change. When the project managers saw these names appear over and over again, they decided to include them. These individuals were among those who were most transformed by the training.

Framing the Invitations to Prospective Participants

Invitations to participate in the project emphasized four themes:

- The invitee is one of a select group of around one hundred leaders identified by other Burundians as individuals whose influence and stature are such that they have the ability to shape the future of their country. Participants reported that this framing underlined the importance of the effort and imbued the leaders with a sense of responsibility to commit to the program.
- Leaders are invited to participate in their personal capacities, not as representatives of organizations or institutions. This enabled participants to feel freer and more open with each other within the workshops even though they knew who the other participants were and what their affiliations were.
- The training workshops are not negotiating venues; rather, they are part of a leadership capacity-building initiative designed to strengthen the individual leadership skills of Burundian leaders. This formulation helped to depoliticize the project, making it easier for people who had been demonized in the course of their conflict to begin to re-engage with one another and providing an excuse for those who resisted earlier opportunities for intergroup dialogue to participate.
- The workshops will be private, with no publicity or press coverage. (Much later in the process, participants decided to make the project public, but this was after they had developed cooperative working relationships and wanted to reassure the public that their leaders were working across political and ethnic lines.)

Securing International and Regional Buy-In

Consultations were held with all donor governments and the regional governments that were responsible for the transition established by the Arusha Peace Agreement. It was important to ensure their full understanding of the objectives of the Burundi project and to receive their analyses of evolving peace process dynamics. On the international front, European powers in particular had been key players in the peace process and were,

of course, potential donors down the line for expanding the work. The regional states were still spearheading the application of the peace agreement—particularly Tanzania, Uganda, and South Africa—or giving sanctuary to rebel groups—the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, and Tanzania—so it was important that all players understood the complementary nature of the project and that the BLTP workshops would never become an alternative negotiating venue. The project managers met with the presidents of each of those countries, as well as other key diplomats and officials in their facilitation teams, and found the South Africans particularly enthusiastic about the training initiative, believing that this work with a diverse group of Burundian leaders would complement and strengthen their efforts at facilitating further negotiated agreements. The Tanzanians and Ugandans were similarly receptive.

Ensuring Program Sustainability

Burundians had extensive experience with well-intended training initiatives that lacked any follow-through or sustainability. Project managers emphasized that the Burundi process was designed not as a series of discrete training sessions but as a continuing process directed to the development of a sustainable, cohesive network of Burundian leaders. This issue was discussed openly with all the leaders and was often met with a cynical response that leaders had seen donors “come and go” but never stay involved. The project managers verbally assured the leaders otherwise, and the invitations to participants underscored the fact that this was not to be a one-off event but rather part of a process of leadership development and networking that would bring the participants together every two or three months for exercises meant to broaden their leadership skills and deepen their personal relationships. Over time, three groups of participating leaders would undergo a series of workshops and then be merged into a single leadership network with reinforcing social and professional interactions. The participants probably were not sanguine that this transition would happen, but after the second and third workshops, the project managers and training teams could see a dramatic change in comfort of the participants and confidence that the Wilson Center and BLTP were “in it for the long haul.”

To ensure that the transition to a leadership network was a realistic objective, the World Bank’s Post-Conflict Fund provided start-up funding for a series of workshops that would be organized over an eighteen-month period. In addition, project managers received assurances from a number of donors who were involved in Burundi that, as the leader-participants began to develop concrete projects of economic recovery or other sector-specific capacity building (such as security sector reform or elections preparations), additional funds would be made available for further training or to meet other project resource requirements.

“Invitations . . . underscored the fact that this was not to be a one-off event but rather part of a process”

Results of the Strategic Selection Process

The Burundi project succeeded in attracting an ethnically balanced and diverse group of key leaders from virtually every social and institutional sector, government and nongovernment, civilian and military. Because of the project's intention to address simultaneously both the ethnic divide within the political elite and the wide gulf between the country's political class and the rest of the population, BLTP participants were drawn in almost equal measure from the political class and civil society. Participants from the political class included a number of high-ranking military and political leaders, such as a minister, the army chief of staff, a top general, the president of the Constitutional Court, the first vice-president of the Senate, a former vice president of the country, a provincial governor, and a number of parliamentarians. Six of the seven rebel groups were represented, as were all the principal political parties. Even the National Liberation Front, the one armed group still outside the peace process, said that it welcomed the BLTP and hoped to join it once security conditions permitted. Civil society representatives were drawn from academia, the media, the youth, business, labor unions, and several grassroots relief, human rights and women's organizations. Both the Catholic and the Pentecostal churches were represented. Catholic participants included a bishop, a priest, a nun, and the secretary-general of the Burundi Catholic Peace and Justice Commission.

Creating a Climate for Participation

Although the Burundi project succeeded in getting the right people in the room, it also had the goal of fostering ownership of and interest in the training, and thus the first few days were critical for cementing effective engagement of the participants in the process.

A principal training objective was to form a climate of mutual trust. Sustainable agreements among competing parties require not only a sense of shared interests but also a set of working human relationships. This means participants must consider one another discrete individuals, not merely members of hostile groups; it also means that each participant is able to put himself or herself "into the shoes of the other." In post-conflict societies, protagonists are familiar with each other—often they have been schooled together, served in past governments, have familial connections, and meet at the same club for drinks. But in reality, these people don't really know each other and assume characteristics or motivations about others that are born of distorted perceptions, stereotypes, and known past affiliations.

During the first few days of the initial BLTP retreat workshop, virtually no reference was made to real-world Burundi or to current political issues. This was intentional. To begin with a discussion of Burundian problems and conflicts would be to invite the participants to see each other in terms of their adversarial identities, a view that would be counterproductive to the training objective of enabling the participants to relate to one another as individuals, not simply as actors in an ethnically defined

political conflict. The workshop would be a safe environment in which individuals felt comfortable taking certain risks, opening up to each other, and exploring new ways of relating to one another. After a few days of interactive communications and negotiation exercises, including SIMSOC (simulated society exercise), there was a perceptible lessening of ethnic sensitivities. As participants developed skills in active listening and expanded their understanding of the conditioned nature of attitudes and perceptions, they began to relate to each other as individuals and to identify common interests and aspirations of which they were previously unaware. They were now able to turn to the real world and to collaborate in analyzing common problems and identifying possible solutions. Toward this end, a portion of every workshop was devoted to examining analytic tools that could assist participants in developing effective decision-making processes, diagnosing problems, and developing and implementing group projects.

There is no quick fix for the attitudinal and perceptual barriers that prevent leaders of divided societies from working together effectively. Training for collaborative capacity must be conceived of not as a single, one-off training event but, rather, as a long-term process. No matter how much impact is felt in the initial training experience—and often the transformational impact of a few days of training is dramatic—participants inevitably return to the “real world,” in which others have not had such training and have difficulty comprehending the altered mindsets of workshop participants. Moreover, like all learning, the “learning” of collaborative decision making must be constantly reinforced—by the practice of skills learned, by the strengthening of relationships, and by actual collaborative initiatives. Otherwise, the new collaborative capacity will erode with time.



A training for teachers on conflict resolution in schools in Ngozi, Burundi. Photograph by Elizabeth McClintock. Used with permission by Elizabeth McClintock.

More about the Wilson Center's Burundi Project Methodology

The Burundi project's "strategic selection" methodology and subsequent steps to engage participants in the training was just the beginning of a comprehensive program designed to effectively engage local actors in capacity building. The training methodology for building collaborative capacity continued this emphasis on process rather than substance. The initial focus of the workshops was on strengthening participants' understanding of the advantages of collaboration and the dangers of a "winner take all" mentality; building a degree of trust among participants; and strengthening participants' communications and negotiations skills. The workshops used experiential learning methods—simulations, interactive exercises, mock negotiations, and role-playing—that were all designed to enable participants to acquire insight, through their own experience of reacting to a series of hypothetical situations, into the attitudes and perceptions that condition their behavior and that of others. In order to build collaborative capacity, participants, rather than being the passive recipients of knowledge, learned primarily by "doing," by being immersed in hypothetical situations that confronted them with the same kinds of dilemmas and conflicts they would face in the real world. This methodology is a case study for engagement unto itself, and is presented in more depth in articles by Wolpe and McDonald in the Round Table and the Journal of Democracy.

Conclusion

According to both those who observed and those who took part, the Burundi project has had remarkable success in breaking down ethnic and political barriers, building social cohesion among training participants, strengthening collaborative capacities, and boosting institutional transformation. Since the original World Bank grant, the Wilson Center and BLTP have been asked to expand their work to encompass a wide variety of security sector, parliamentary, and other government actors. Nearly 600 national leaders from all these sections have now received the Wilson Center process training, as have over 7,000 local formal and informal leaders. The members of the original network of ninety-five continue to meet and work together, to socialize, and to collaborate on a number of projects and activities. They have applied the lessons they learned—and the potent example of their own collaboration—to the institutions with which they are involved as well as to the broader society. In 2008, the Ministry of Education began to develop a curriculum in conflict resolution for inclusion in the national secondary schools' civics curriculum. This project, funded by USAID, has engaged the pedagogy bureau of the ministry, teachers, unions, and outside experts to develop and test the curriculum, train teachers, evaluate impact, and prepare plans for a national implementation. As of December 2010, the curriculum was fully tested in pilot schools.

The importance of more holistic peacebuilding interventions that directly engage the mind-sets and attitudes of key leaders is beginning to be recognized in several post-conflict initiatives beyond Burundi—in such war-torn societies as the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Liberia. In these places, the Wilson Center was invited by diplomats and international institutions to employ its neutrality, leverage, and Burundi-based experience in securing the participation of key national leaders from diverse social and institutional sectors in training initiatives designed to build (or rebuild) cohesion and collaborative capacity. These internationally facilitated efforts have been directed not—as in Iraq—at imposing constitutional or political “fixes” conceived by external interests, but rather at providing the key leaders of these divided societies the tools with which they could themselves collaboratively build their own future. In Burundi, the Wilson Center’s project and the creation of the BLTP, which is now doing independent peacebuilding work, yielded quantifiable and rewarding results that contributed to the democratization process. Although too little time has elapsed to make definitive conclusions about this approach to post-conflict reconstruction in the Democratic Republic of the Congo or Liberia, the initial indications are encouraging, so much so that the leadership training model was extended to Timor-Leste at the request of the World Bank and is now being considered for extension to other conflict zones.

Note

1. This case study is based on three publications: Howard Wolpe and Steve McDonald, “Burundi’s Transition: Training Leaders for Peace,” *Journal of Democracy* 17, no. 1 (January 2006); Howard Wolpe and Steve McDonald, “Democracy and Peace-Building: Re-Thinking the Conventional Wisdom,” *Round Table* 97, no. 394 (February 2008): 137–45; and Howard Wolpe with Steve McDonald, Eugene Nindorera, Elizabeth McClintock, Alain Lempereur, Fabien Nsengimana, Nicole Rumeau, and Alli Blair, “Rebuilding Peace and State Capacity in War-Torn Burundi,” *Round Table* 93, no. 375 (July 2004): 457–67.

Advising Ministries: A Co-analysis Strategy

Nadia Gerspacher

“If you don’t utilize the local capacity, it doesn’t matter how much you add from the outside.” This was how a senior Afghan ministry official summed up his experience with the international advisers sent to build his capacity to manage a ministry. The official had literally grown up in the ministry, working as an assistant to his father in the ministry when he was a child and holding several posts there over the years. But when the international advisers arrived, they never asked about his previous experience or his views on the challenges of building capacity; instead, they dictated an agenda that was in many respects inappropriate for the needs of the advisees, their ministries, and the country itself.

A former Iraqi minister registered similar complaints about the advising process, saying it lacked “understanding, compassion, and respect for what we went through and what we already know.” She felt that the technical support offered was too general and theoretical, as if advisers were assuming that Iraqis knew nothing about engineering. She believes that advisers should have talked with their Iraqi counterparts to learn what kind of engineering practice they used, identified weaknesses together, and created a team of advisers to address those specific issues.

Of course, ministerial advisers have their own side of the story, explaining that the ministries are often fundamentally flawed in ways that must be changed if they are to operate effectively and fairly, and that previous staff and leaders, with vested interests in the old approaches or who are unable to adapt to necessary changes, are obstacles to improving the system. Even if they are willing, local officials often may not have the skills and competencies to reach a desired outcome for their organization.

Co-analysis is a strategy for starting an advising, training, or mentoring process in a way that draws on local knowledge and skills, putting the advisee in an active role in shaping the transfer of expertise. This approach builds rapport with advisees and increases their willingness to participate in the mentoring process and accept new approaches, increasing the likelihood that they will take responsibility for implementing reforms in the ministry. At the same time, it improves the quality and relevance of the reform agenda and more efficiently aligns outside expertise with critical needs.

Co-analysis involves three steps. First, the adviser identifies the existing capacity of the counterpart by asking questions to identify necessary skills and assessing existing capacity. This is the equivalent of a training needs assessment, conducted in interview style. The adviser is trying to find out who does what, with what means, what the counterpart understands about the necessary processes, and how sophisticated the current approach is. Second, the adviser and the counterpart identify together the function and associated tasks required for a system to function properly. This conversation requires the adviser and the counterpart to come to some agreement about what “proper functioning” entails. Third, the adviser and the counterpart identify the specific knowledge and skills necessary for the learner to perform his or her function to the desired effect.

After or as part of co-analysis, the adviser frames what he or she has to offer in terms of expertise and support, allowing the counterpart to draw on the resources he or she considers valuable.

Co-analysis has not been used systematically as an approach to advising local ministry officials, but many advisers have integrated some of its concepts into their interactions with ministries. Both advisers and their local counterparts see a significant improvement in relationships and results when this approach is used.

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Case Study 2

Research-Based Dialogue

Guatemalan Dialogue on Security Sector Reform

Bernardo Arévalo de León

The Guatemalan Peace Accords, signed between the government and guerrilla forces in December 1996, established an ambitious and wide-ranging program for reform aimed at addressing the root causes of the thirty-six-year violent conflict. A specific agreement within the accords—the Agreement on the Strengthening of Civil Society and the function of the Military in Democratic Society—was devoted to the establishment of a series of reforms necessary for the effective transformation of the authoritarian and counterinsurgent state security apparatus. By 1999, though, it was evident that implementation of this agreement was lacking. The policies necessary to transform it into a reality were lacking, in particular those relating to military reform and demilitarization of the security apparatus.¹

A series of factors produced this stalemate:

- Weakness and inconsistency of the civilian political leadership—government authorities and political parties—in the design, negotiation, and implementation of the necessary policies
- Mistrust, disorientation, disinformation, and varying degrees of resistance to reform within the military
- Difficulties in the development of a constructive dialogue between authorities and society and between the military and civil society, due to a legacy of mistrust, polarization, and fragmentation and the inability of political parties to play a mediating role
- Limited understanding and command by civilians—in state and in society—of the technical aspects of security issues, which had been monopolized by the military in the previous four decades

To overcome the stalemate, advisers recognized the need for a process that would address these factors, fostering productive interaction between state and society and achieving concrete recommendations that would be technically sound and legitimate.

A Research-Based Dialogue Strategy

Recognizing that social tensions prevented a traditional dialogue among stakeholders, a partnership of Guatemalan and international actors decided to launch a research-based dialogue initiative to address these challenges. This approach had been used successfully in the aftermath of the Guatemalan Peace Accords, when the UN had implemented a research-based dialogue as part of its War-Torn Societies Project, which became institutionalized as an autonomous organization known as WSP International and later changed its name to Interpeace. The research-based dialogue approach aims to create a new, neutral space in society so that constructive engagement can take place even in the context of prevailing, reciprocal mistrust.

The research-based dialogue approach integrates a research methodology called participatory action research (PAR). Designed in the 1960s to make communities active participants in social research instead of targets of research, PAR uses research activities to empower communities to engage in political activity and transformation. The research is collectively owned by the participants, not by the researcher, who eventually becomes an executing agent of the collective will of the group. WSP (Interpeace) refined this methodology to support reconciliation by focusing on inclusiveness and consensus and to build it into a wider approach of participatory research-based dialogue. Such dialogue achieves not only consensus-based concrete recommendations for outstanding problems but also transformations in attitudes and perceptions that become the foundation for further collaborative interaction among participants.

A research-based dialogue approach to Guatemalan security sector reform required three major elements. First, to enable discussion of highly contentious issues, the effort would have to be depoliticized as much as possible. This could be accomplished by stressing the effort's academic nature and focusing on mid- to long-term issues. Second, the approach would need to create and sustain a perception of impartiality by emphasizing procedural aspects. Third, the approach would need to make policy recommendations nonbinding, preventing political posturing.

To achieve these goals, the project had to function as an autonomous space, established by credible and trusted local institutions, endowed with its own rules and regulations and subject to the collective authority of participants. This reality reflects the guiding principle of Interpeace in peacebuilding interventions: that a local project team rather than an international NGO play a third-party role. The local project team, and, more important the process it puts in place, then becomes the "trusted neutral" instead of the outsider. (The dynamics of building the capacity of that local team is therefore an

engagement strategy in itself, but this strategy is not explored in this study, which focuses instead on the role that the local project team can play in facilitating stakeholder dialogue.)

In Guatemala, two research institutions, the local chapter of the Latin America Faculty for Social Sciences (FLACSO) and the Guatemalan Institute for Peace and Development (IGEDEP), had participated in an earlier effort to foster consensus around an agenda for post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation based on the peace accords. They were familiar with the research-based dialogue approach and invited WSP (Interpeace) to adapt its participatory peacebuilding approach to the challenge of security reform. Together with WSP (Interpeace), these institutions created a project team to manage the process and interface with the participants. The two local organizations provided staff and institutional support for the project team, while WSP (Interpeace) provided methodological support: advising on process matters, raising possible alternatives, and providing experience from other projects.

The nature of the institutions was critical in establishing the depoliticized, academic nature of the process. Even if not considered “neutral” in the context of the polarized political life of Guatemala, FLACSO was recognized as one of the most serious research centers in the country, with an active and prolific academic program dealing with security and defense issues and a reputation for academic objectivity and excellence. IGEDEP was a recently established think tank with a board of directors of highly reputed personalities from different ideological orientations—social scientists, lawyers, diplomats—interested in combating polarization and overcoming ideological entrenchment. WSP International had a reputation of impartiality and objectivity from its role in the earlier research-based dialogue. These organizations requested the support of the UN Development Programme in operationalizing the project, therefore providing further guarantees of impartiality and responsibility.²

But even in the context of a partnership with foreign institutions such as WSP International and the United Nations Development Programme,³ the project functioned as a wholly Guatemalan effort. FLACSO and IGEDEP were fully in control of the process, and design and implementation of the initiative were entrusted to the Guatemalan project team. Emphasis on local ownership was strategic and addressed two issues: on the one hand, it related to questions of impact, capacity building, and sustainability that are pertinent to any peacebuilding intervention. On the other hand, it addressed concerns of different participants—particularly the military—about discussing contentious national security issues in an environment controlled by outsiders, or even including foreign participation.⁴ The locally controlled nature of the project was more acceptable to those actors.

*“Even in the context of a partnership with foreign institutions
... the project functioned as a wholly Guatemalan effort”*

Mobilizing and Balancing Participation

To be viable, the project needed to respond to the key interests and concerns of all participating sectors. The military was concerned that the process would be turned into an institutional lynching of the army by revenge-thirsty ideological adversaries, but was interested in legitimating its function in the new context. The government was concerned that the process could upset the delicate balance it had achieved in its relationship with the army and its factions, but was interested in advancing in the implementation of the peace agenda and curtailing increasing criticism in this respect. Civil society institutions and individuals had a range of differing concerns and interests, depending on their particular activity and sociopolitical outlook, but in general were interested in turning the page on conflict and concerned about the continuation of authoritarian practices by security forces.

FLASCO and IGDEP held discussions with national authorities and civil society actors that mobilized strong support for the initiative. The military was approached in coordination with national authorities in order to mobilize their will to participate beyond formal compliance with executive directives by civilian authorities, a goal achieved after eight intense meetings in which the aims, the principles, and the method of the project were examined.

An important element in establishing the project's objectivity and impartiality was the development of a perception among participants that representation was "balanced," that is, that the different legitimate sectors with a stake in this issue had a rightful place in the discussion and no sector had been artificially inflated in order to achieve prefabricated coalitions. Another imperative in this respect was to reach out to different sectors, including hardliners and spoilers, in the proceedings. The project team started by doing a careful actor-mapping process—initial desk research followed by extensive individual and collective interviews—that identified the issues, positions, and actors around the agenda of transformation established in the agreement. The project intentionally avoided limiting participation to those already convinced of the need to agree or to "politically correct" individuals who would ensure the "right" recommendations. The project team enlisted participation from key actors in state and society gradually, so that by the time hardliners and spoilers were interviewed and invited, the project was a fact and important figures had already committed to participate, making missing out on the exercise undesirable.⁵

Invitations were extended on an institutional basis to governmental agencies (security sector dependencies in the executive branch, congressional committees, and the presidential secretariat responsible for implementation of the peace accords) and civil society organizations (academic institutions and NGOs, including the human rights community and organizations established by the former guerrilla movements).

Individual invitations were extended to a group of personalities representative of social sectors that did not have any institutional engagement with security issues—the indigenous movement and the private sector—and to retired military officers who represented different positions within the institution that could not be expressed by its official representation.⁶ This mechanism was a lesson learned from an earlier experience with national dialogue in which some groups were unable to participate because there was no alternative to official institutional representation.

Using Procedures to Build Legitimacy and Capacity

The project team approached the procedural aspects of the dialogue not as technical issues but as “political” components that consciously aimed to enhance the legitimacy of the project and build the technical and conceptual capacity of the participants. The overall methodological approach was shared with all interviewees at the moment of invitation. This approach included the reason for an academic emphasis and the nonbinding nature of the resulting products; its inclusiveness and participatory nature; the structuring of technical working groups and the plenary, including decision making procedures; and the use throughout of PAR principles. The impact of each of these elements is explored briefly below.



Civil society and government representatives from several Latin American countries gather for a seminar on comparative experiences on security sector reform processes. Photograph by Alejandro Morales. Used with permission by Interpeace.

The research-based dialogue approach was used to prevent politicization of the process and to foster a noncompetitive dynamic. The academic nature of the exercise and the nonbinding nature of its recommendations allowed extensive exploration of the conceptual foundations of the issues before consideration on what had happened in the past could take place or recommendations for the future could be contemplated, both areas in which positions were highly politicized. Decision making on alternative policy recommendations by the working groups was delayed until a common language had been established, sufficient agreement had been forged on basic principles and goals and a new, collective identity had emerged that united participants behind a common purpose.

The selection and use of researchers and moderators for the working groups was an important aspect of building legitimacy and capacity, and another lesson learned from problems with the earlier dialogues. The project team selected researchers from different sectors so that all participants could see themselves “represented” somewhere in the research team. A researcher close to the military was selected for one of the groups, while a vocal human rights NGO was asked to undertake the research for another.

The assignment of researchers to each working group helped address the challenge of conceptual and technical asymmetries between the participants regarding the workings of security institutions in a democratic context. Researchers were able to set an appropriate pace for the learning and decision-making process so that a collective identity could evolve, and ensured that there was a shared level of understanding before decisions were made. The groups began by discussing the most basic notions of each subject in an effort to establish a common language and framework. The researchers also served to validate nontechnical input and knowledge from the participants so that all participants felt they had something to contribute.

The project team organized conferences and seminars strategically to ensure that the input arrived at a moment when it could be absorbed by the participants. For instance, a seminar on intelligence reform took place when the working group on democratic controls was considering different options for executive, judiciary, and parliamentary oversight and could engage in substantive dialogue instead of just passively listening. Many of these events were intended to bring firsthand experiences from other countries that had already reformed. Care was taken to include different perspectives—political, military, and academic—in each case, thus ensuring that the different participants could empathize with the presenters.

The working groups were asked to select by consensus a member as a moderator to facilitate discussions. The intention was to challenge the group to engage in collective

decision making from the outset. Although most working groups were able to agree on a single moderator, one group resolved a stalemate between two candidates with a decision to turn them into a moderation team.⁷ The moderators became critical elements in the functioning of the group in the context of the PAR approach, representing the collective will of the working groups vis-à-vis the researchers and the project team.

Rules of procedure were important in creating and maintaining commitment from the participants. By consensus, the plenary approved specific procedural rules during its first sessions, after discussion of draft rules of procedure prepared by the project team. These rules included how issues were tabled for discussion; how research was developed in the working groups; how proposals moved between the technical and the political level; how to proceed in case of lack of consensus; and how institutions and individuals presented their comments and make suggestions. Any proposed changes or additions to the rules had to be referred to the plenary for approval. In one example of its flexible approach toward maintaining consensus, the plenary created an ad hoc working group as a mechanism to continue researching an issue that lacked sufficient consensus for the full plenary to move forward.

The adoption of consensual decision making was significant. The military feared that majority-based voting would put it at a disadvantage because as an institution, it would always be limited to a single vote vis-à-vis an indeterminate number of civil society organizations. Therefore, the dialogue adopted a consensual decision-making process. This process forced the proceedings to long, sometimes exhausting discussions, both at the technical and the decision-making levels. It also limited the scope of the proposals to aspects in which real consensus had been achieved among participants, which in some cases meant an agreement on principles more than on operational detail.⁸ In addition, the process enabled a sense of shared ownership over the results to emerge; this sense became a common asset, a key element in terms of the sustainability of the process and its recommendations.

Conclusions and Lessons Learned

By 2003, the project had achieved concrete results in terms of the policy recommendations it was pursuing, as well as in the development of conditions for sustained engagement beyond the lifespan of the project. Several recommendations went directly into policy-formulation processes. Even more importantly, the dialogue on security issues continued in a variety of forums: an official process for the development of a white paper on defense, an office liaising between civil society organizations and parliamentary commissions, a civil society security advisory council to the president, a national security system law.

“The moderators . . . [came to represent] the collective will of the working group”

The team learned lessons from failure as well as success. Although invited to engage in the process, political parties chose not to do so, thereby limiting the project's ability to influence their political agendas. Consultations with party activists revealed that the main reason for the parties' nonparticipation was incompatibility between the pace and rhythm of the project and the demands of political debate and legislative work: politicians needed technical input for legislative work provided in a more agile manner. This problem was resolved by designing a new project that included an official agreement between Congress and Interpeace; by the terms of this agreement, participant civil society organizations provided technical support to parliamentary commissions working on security-sector legislation between 2004 and 2010.

Several conclusions can be derived from this experience:

- The project's academic nature, its low public profile, and its focus on mid- to long-term policies created a framework in which participants were able to overcome political and ideological positioning and engage in a rational analysis of the issues.
- The project's neutrality toward the different institutional interests in state and society, the balance achieved among participants, and a methodology for incremental consensus building made possible the discussion of politically sensitive issues and the formulation of concrete recommendations.
- The PAR approach mitigated the asymmetry in knowledge among the group members and encouraged hands-on capacity building.
- Direct involvement of government officials in the process, at the working group and plenary level, facilitated the channeling of the recommendations into the public policy formulation processes, and illustrated for government officers the value of collaboration with academic and other civil society organizations.
- The development of shared interests and the hands-on experience of collaborative action constituted a confidence-building process that allowed incremental progress, the development of new alignments and alliances, and the formulation of a new consensus.
- The unobtrusive role adopted by the international actors that supported the project (by providing methodological, financial, and political support to a locally driven initiative) allowed a real sense of ownership to emerge among participants and facilitated the internalization of the process and its products.

Notes

1. For a complete analysis of the project, including perspectives from participants, see Bernardo Arévalo de León, Jose Beltran and Doña, and Philip H. Fluri, eds., *Hacia una Política de Seguridad para la Democracia en Guatemala. Investigación-Acción Participativa para la Reforma del Sector Seguridad* (Geneva: DCAF- Lit Verlag, 2005).

2. Funding for the project was provided by the United Nations Development Programme, USAID, the government of the Netherlands, and the government of Norway.
3. For an analysis of the interaction between the project and UN efforts to support implementation of the peace accords, see Jose Giupponi, “Developing National Capacities to Manage Democratic Security: Relevance of WSP International Projects for MINUGUA’s Verification Mandate and Their Impacts on the Implementation of the Guatemala Peace Accords” (WSP International, March 2006), available online at <http://www.interpeace.org/images/pdf/wsp_and_minugua_march_2006_english_final_draft_with_executive_summary_op3.pdf>.
4. Hardliner elements in the military believed that international intervention in national politics had prevented outright victory over the insurgency and dictated the terms of the peace accords.
5. Invitations were made in the context of interviews with identified candidates on the nature of the problem, the challenges, and similar topics.
6. Representing the political sensitivity of the moment, the government requested that an organization of military veterans that was outspokenly attacking the peace process and the accords not participate in the process. The army stated for the record that the organization should be invited because it represented veterans, but off the record, the army asked the project not to invite the organization for fear of endangering the delicate internal balance between competing army factions. The project team subsequently invited retired army officers who were members of the organization on an individual basis to ensure that the views of this sector would be considered, and invited the organization to participate in its open events.
7. The project team provided training and technical support to the moderators, who also participated in project team planning and review meetings.
8. The scope of the recommendations was different in each case, ranging from matters of principles in the case of military doctrine to organizational details in the case of intelligence reform. For the full text of the recommendations in Spanish, see <http://www.interpeace.org/index.php/publications/cat_view/8-publications/14-past-programmes/19-guatemala>.

Culturally Sensitive Engagement in Bougainville

Iain Campbell Smith

Peace talks between Bougainville rebels and the government of Papua New Guinea brought an eight-year war of independence to an end. The agreement invited Pacific countries to send in a monitoring force to oversee the cease-fire on the condition that the force come unarmed. With soldiers and civilians from Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, and Vanuata, the Peace Monitoring Group, established and deployed to Bougainville in December 1997, was the world's first unarmed peacekeeping intervention.

Iain "Fred" Smith, working part time in the Australian Foreign Affairs Department while beginning a career as a singer-songwriter, was deployed to Bougainville in early 1999. Although he was sent to Bougainville to monitor, report, and translate, he discovered, quite by accident, that his musical talents could be of service to the peace process. One evening, he was picking his guitar on the porch of the Peace Monitoring Group's outpost in southwest Bougainville underneath the only light bulb in the village. Soon two hundred people had gathered out of the darkness to listen. He made up a song in the local pidgin language to engage the group; and over the subsequent weeks, he wrote more, until he had a repertoire.

In the early phases of the peace process, the group's main objective was to be present and visible on the island and to project positive messages about the peace process. The captain of Smith's patrol team thought that a concert would be a useful excuse for the presence of the team in the villages, so he developed a patrol structure around Smith, his guitar, some stories, and a quartet of soldiers singing backup vocals. (Smith notes that the soldiers initially were wretched singers but improved with time.) The staff at headquarters were persuaded that these songs might be used to promote positive messages about the peace process and so sent over a recording desk and microphones. Working with local sound engineers and musicians, Smith recorded his songs and songs written by local musicians reflecting on their experiences of the conflict and the peace. These recordings were mastered onto *Songs of Peace*, a cassette of which twenty thousand copies were distributed around the island. The music became very popular, and the concept of using music to promote peace was integrated into Bougainville's new community radio station, which featured reconciliation programming.

In the aftermath of the atrocious civil war, Bougainvilleans preferred to address reconciliation through traditional local processes rather than through the truth and reconciliation commissions commonly used in post-conflict situations. The international intervention force, partly because of its unarmed status, partly because of its leadership and mindset of the participating institutions, had assumed a facilitative and non-dominating role and was eager to encourage local reconciliation mechanisms. Recognition of the role that music played in the Bougainville culture allowed the Peace Monitoring Group to develop a channel that engaged local actors in a way that resonated with their own traditions.

In 2005, a documentary film called *Bougainville Sky* was released celebrating the role of music in what became an unusually successful peace process. The film pointed out that the music served

a number of functions: it reached disaffected youth otherwise immune to messages smacking of didacticism; it contributed to a mood of mirth and optimism around the peace process; and it bolstered the image of the peace monitors and therefore the credibility of the peace process by breaking the ice between and among peace monitors, former combatants, and otherwise wary villagers. A successful peace process is ultimately about changing hearts and minds; in Bougainville, music was a major component of the triumph of that process.

Fred Smith's songs about Bougainville are on a CD called Bagarap Empires, which is available through <<http://www.fredsmith.com.au>>. Bougainville Sky is distributed by Ronin Films.



Fred Smith sings to schoolchildren in Bougainville. Photo by Corporal Troy Rodgers, licenced to and courtesy of the Australian Department of Defence.

Case Study 3

Mobilizing Community Decision Making

The Iraq Community Action Program

Sally Iadarola and Lindsey Jones

Peace is never successfully imposed by outsiders. However, outsiders can help create a culture of peace through local empowerment processes; this fact has been successfully demonstrated by a contextualized community-driven development methodology applied in eight provinces in central and northern Iraq.

In 2003, USAID awarded ACIDI/VOCA the first phase of a community-driven development project in northern Iraq, the Iraq Community Action Program (ICAP).¹ Now in its third phase, the goal of ICAP is to enhance local government's ability to identify, articulate, and better meet the needs of its constituency. By promoting democracy and good governance, the program's ultimate objective is preventing and mitigating conflict while enhancing local capacity. In 2008, the World Bank awarded ACIDI/VOCA the pilot Consultative Services Delivery Initiative, followed in 2010 by the Consultative Services Delivery Project I and in 2011 by the Consultative Services Delivery Project II,² which are generally consistent with the ICAP process described below. The current phase focuses heavily on embedding the process within government ministries such as the Ministry of Planning.

The ICAP Process

ICAP is based on a structured process of community mobilization in which citizen advocate groups jointly work with local government representatives on co-implementing activities such as projects, trainings, and public meetings. This process builds on lessons learned in war-torn parts of the world, contextualizing a relatively standard community-driven development methodology within a large geographic region characterized by highly diverse security, cultural, political, ethnic, religious, and linguistic environments.

What makes the ICAP process different from other community-driven development approaches is the creation of community volunteer committees, called community action groups (CAGs). These nonregistered, volunteer, nonpolitical local action groups were a new phenomenon in Iraq. CAG members are democratically elected representatives of their communities and include ordinary citizens as well as local government representatives. Members work together to (1) identify community

resources and gaps in resources; (2) prioritize local projects to fill resource gaps; (3) plan and monitor project implementation; and (4) formalize government support for project operations and maintenance.

ICAP Results 2003-11

- *153 community groups mobilized in eight provinces*
- *More than 2,600 community projects completed*
- *Community projects valued at more than \$75.5 million*
- *Community/local government contributions of over \$29 million to total project costs*
- *More than 13,400 long-term jobs created*

In Iraq, community-led projects span diverse sectors, including education, health, water and sewerage, irrigation, electricity, business, and services, as well as youth- and women-focused services. Each community construction, rehabilitation or supply project costs, on average, \$60,000. To encourage buy-in for sustainability, ICAP now requires a cost-share contribution toward the cost of projects. Combined contributions, per project, from local government, the private sector, and individuals have ranged from 20 to 43 percent.

The ICAP process applies teaching and learning methods that stress participation, joint problem solving, local management, transparency, accountability, and respect for differences. Community members and local government officials are able to put peacemaking into practice when they use these strategies to implement local projects for common benefit. Iraqis see for themselves the positive results of joint government-citizen activities.

This methodology is effective because it is easy to comprehend, is based on volunteerism, and relies on empowered local actors as the primary agents of change.

Throughout more than eight years of refinements and significant scale-up of the program, the core principles of the standard methodology remain unchanged.

How Local Actors Are Engaged

The first step in community engagement is selecting target communities based on criteria that correspond with the goals of the program. For example, “communities prone to conflict” was one of the initial selection criteria for ICAP. As ICAP goals changed to focus more on local government decision making, criteria were expanded to include the presence of basic “local government capacity.”

ICAP Initial Community Selection Criteria	
Criteria	Justification
<i>High population of impoverished or vulnerable citizens</i>	<i>Reaches the most vulnerable people</i>
<i>Access to economic and natural resources (agriculture, oil, minerals)</i>	<i>Achieves meaningful results toward self-sufficiency</i>
<i>Area comprising heterogeneous social, cultural, or religious mix and with a history or potential for conflict</i>	<i>Targets areas with greatest potential peacebuilding impact and challenges; targets those whose opinions are likely or important to be positively influenced; targets those living within Transfer Disputed Territories (TDTs)</i>
<i>Communities within close proximity to others or serving as a transportation hub</i>	<i>Facilitates potential clustering of projects and enables smooth implementation</i>
<i>Activities and programs of other donor organizations</i>	<i>Provides complementary and not overlapping benefits to the communities</i>

Once community selection criteria are identified, ACIDI/VOCA staff create an initial profile, based on input of staff, government representatives, civil society organizations, as well as from the donor, of potential target communities to determine which communities best fit the selection criteria. Based on this, ACIDI/VOCA staff select the communities with which to partner.

ACIDI/VOCA project staff then improve community profiles by conducting site visits, assessments, and data collection using elements of a participatory rural (or urban) assessment methodology. These expanded profiles include information on access to basic public services and employment and, in security-permissive areas, local governance characteristics, social capital/trust characteristics, and conflict characteristics.

Community profiles are periodically updated in coordination with local government offices, whose involvement is critical. Public-private involvement in this process plays a key role in improving relations between community members and government and linking community priorities with public funding, political support, government

strategies, and local development plans. Although ACDI/VOCA staff in the past solicited information from local government representatives for these profiles, under ICAP phase three, staff now encourage CAG representatives to conduct community assessments themselves in consultation with community members, government sources, and other donors to update the profiles.

Direct engagement of the broader community begins by gaining the support and assistance from the communities' most influential natural and elected or appointed leaders. In ICAP, this is often the mayor and district or subdistrict council chairperson/ other local councilor. Leaders are generally motivated by the possibility of donor funding to support services and infrastructure improvements for their communities and the prospect of enhanced citizen support for their leadership.

Once support for ICAP participation is assured, ACDI/VOCA staff and the initial contacts agree on a time and place to hold a community-wide meeting, during which community members elect a volunteer committee or CAG, composed of nine people. Under the current phase of ICAP, CAGs include at least two women and two members who are also part of the local council. Careful attention is devoted to ensuring that community meetings represent the major demographic groups in the community, with staff explaining the need for broad representation. The mayor and/or other leaders invite community members to this meeting. In some cases, the mayor or other leader asks each staff member to invite several people from different representative groups, including tribal groups.

The presence of local tribal leaders at the initial meeting is important to gain the trust of the broader community. The ACDI/VOCA staff introduces the program, CAG concept, and the community project process, after which a participatory resource-mapping exercise is introduced. Resource mapping is an asset-based as opposed to a needs-based tool. The exercise begins with drawing a map of the community. The community members are then asked to identify which resources are available, rare, and missing or nonexistent in their community. Resources may include electricity, water, schools, hospitals or health clinics, irrigation system, community halls, playgrounds, and veterinary services; they are normally identified by sector (e.g., education, health) and are drawn on the map in the approximate location. To conclude this exercise, community members are asked to prioritize these resources by need. They then elect a nine-member CAG.

The resource-mapping exercise is used to gain and maintain momentum—to trigger community pride in existing community assets as a basis for identifying gaps and to convey the tangible positive benefits that the community action program participatory process, with its associated community projects, can bring to the community. The mapping exercise also provides a platform for identifying and planning projects later in the process.

During the activities of the initial community meeting, project staff play a key role in building the motivation of community members-at-large to actively participate in the process on a volunteer basis. ICAP is a program primarily implemented by Iraqis for Iraqis. The ratio of expatriate staff to national staff at any given time is approximately one expatriate for thirty-five national staff. Staff members known as “community mobilizers” are selected, in part for their outgoing and energetic personalities but also for their understanding of government processes and management experience. Mobilizers must be perceived as sincere in order to connect with and secure the participation of other community members. ACIDI/VOCA selects mobilizers from within the community in which they will be working, where possible. A factor for successfully mobilizing communities is the message that there will be tangible benefits from the projects selected through active participation of community members with local councils. ACIDI/VOCA offers examples of successful projects led by other CAGs. The resource-mapping exercise, in which citizens voice their concerns, identify problems, and suggest solutions, also encourages active participation and bolsters enthusiasm for sustained engagement.

How Local Actors Are Empowered

The ICAP approach to CAG capacity building includes community development orientation and formal training complemented by a “learning-by-doing” approach through participation in the community project planning, implementation, and monitoring/evaluation cycle. Throughout the project cycle, CAG members participate in a stepped program of training packages designed to equip them to (1) participate in project proposal reviews; (2) effectively communicate project status to the community;



Ramla Al Obaidi (third from left), a member of the Kirkuk Community Action Group, discusses community priorities during training on advocacy and coalition building. Used with permission by ACIDI/VOCA.

(3) work with the community and local government to ensure that local contribution commitments to total project costs are met and documented; (4) ensure that projects are properly implemented, used, and maintained; and (5) understand government funding processes and how local government-citizen coalitions can work strategically with higher levels of government.

Specific skill sets in which CAG members are trained include project design, proposal preparation, contracting, recordkeeping, leadership, basic conflict resolution, public-private partnerships, and monitoring and evaluation. All CAG members volunteer their time. They receive training at no cost, but normally must take time off from their regular work to attend the training and project-related activities, such as project site monitoring.

CAG member participation in the ICAP, as discussed in the following section, gives participants the opportunity to practice the skills learned in formal training. This “learning-by-doing” approach to capacity building emphasizes the process of project development in addition to the quality and impact of the end product, that is, the community project.

How the Project Is Implemented

CAGs develop project ideas into formal project proposals in concert with ACDI/VOCA staff and relevant government technical staff and officials. For example, construction projects require planning and oversight by a project engineer and often the approval of an engineer from the corresponding government department. CAGs participate in feasibility planning for the identified projects and then develop a proposal and budget and gather the necessary documentation and government approvals and secure community or local government contributions as in-kind cost-share. Once the proposals are complete, they are submitted to the project review committee comprising ACDI/VOCA staff from program, monitoring and evaluation, procurement, engineering, and finance departments.

At a project review committee meeting, CAGs present their proposals, which are reviewed, discussed, and approved or approved pending completion of documentation (if certain information is missing or further proposal or budget development is required). . Project evaluation criteria include community need for the project, expected impact, feasibility, project cost, long-term sustainability (including project holder’s technical ability and commitment to maintain the project), and community support/ financial contribution. Once approved, community projects are implemented through competitively selected local contractors under strict bidding, procurement, and contracting guidelines spelled out in a project procurement manual.³ Because

ICAP operates in a conflict environment with weak rule of law and high levels of corruption, ACIDI/VOCA maintains full control of all funds and procurement processes. Communities have control over the use of funds only. CAGs remain involved in the project during implementation through project monitoring and evaluation in coordination with technical project officers and local government partners.

Once the project is completed and evaluated, and all contracts are finalized, ACIDI/VOCA transfers the project to the community. Hand-over of completed community-level projects is typically accompanied by official ceremonies to celebrate democratic efforts on the part of CAGs, communities, and local governments working together and to foster continued commitment to joint ownership of the project. This joint participation and recognition of the project has been very important in strengthening citizens' confidence in the local government's commitment to address their needs. It also highlights to officials the community's expectations for government accountability and responsiveness in the maintenance of the project.

Lessons Learned

The success of the ICAP process validates the contextualized community-driven development methodology. Lessons learned continue to be integrated into the ICAP through a feedback loop and will serve as points of reference for future projects in other conflict-affected environments. This section describes several keys to success based on our experience.

Focus on Process

ICAP emphasizes a process of community mobilization and project development. Delivering a quality project that meets gaps in essential resources in the community occurs in tandem with building the capacity of CAG members and community stakeholders, including the local government, to implement the process on their own in the future. This multistep process with CAG members and the local government, who are required to interact at various steps, demonstrates that results can be obtained quickly within the framework of government bureaucracy when projects are jointly identified, well-planned, clearly presented, and closely monitored. ICAP's process-driven approach results in the increased capacity of community members and project stakeholders to adopt quality standards and jointly advocate for more stringent government monitoring of community projects generally. We have begun to see this process transferred to community investment projects wholly funded by the government.

*“Because ICAP operates in a conflict environment . . .
ACIDI/VOCA maintains full control of all funds”*

Conduct Resource-Mapping and Community Assessment Exercises

The resource-mapping exercise prompts community members to assess their resources, infrastructure, and services and to prioritize the community's resource gaps. At a community-wide meeting in the presence of local government officials, the exercise is one of the first opportunities for community members to express their needs to officials. ACIDI/VOCA trainers later prompt CAG members to expand upon the resource-mapping exercise during formal trainings. The graphic and comprehensive nature of the exercise—which involved depicting spatial relationships and using colors to reflect emotions attached to different institutions—provides a rich canvas easily understood by everyone, even those with little formal education. The mapping exercise helps Iraqis recognize that they have something of value they can build on and puts front and center the notion that this is an Iraqi program that will succeed, or not, because of Iraqis—a concept reinforced by the fact that the project staff is predominantly Iraqi. In addition, the exercise provides an opportunity for community members to identify resource-based conflict drivers within their community, even if not explicitly stating them as such. This is a natural outcome of the activity because it compels community members to analyze the effects of scarce or missing resources in their community and prioritize their needs based on that analysis.

Secure the Contribution of Local Government

The interaction between CAG members and local government, during negotiations for government project contribution and advocacy to state ministries to operate and maintain the project after completion, is not simply a means to funding. These interactions, as well as joint training, partnership conferences, and public meetings, build local partnerships, leadership, and awareness of what is possible under a democratic framework as well as forecast what citizens can expect from their government when they systematically ask for government help to address resource gaps. Over the life of the ICAP, we have learned that potential delays in receipt of government contributions can be avoided by addressing the issue with government officials early in the community project planning phase.

Consistently Apply Transparent Policies and Procedures

For effective management of a community project, clearly established programmatic and administrative policies and procedures must be in place and enforced. ICAP benefited from adhering to the following processes and procedures:

- Creating a systematic project cycle structure that can be learned easily and followed smoothly; the cycle covers feasibility planning, proposal and budget development and evaluation, documentation from local government and stakeholders, measurement of project impact and reach, and communication flow and protocols
- Establishing transparent tendering processes, contracting, and coordination of payments
- Clearly defining cost-sharing between the community and local government and guidelines for determining value and documentation
- Conducting regular site visits to monitor project status and contractor performance and providing regular internal updates/reports on project status
- Ensuring clear security protocols, coordinated with transportation and logistics procedures, and conducting ongoing security assessments
- Introducing community project cycle management tools in the context of broader funding opportunities
- Continuously streamlining project procedures adapted to local political dynamics and current government policies

Optimize Training Results through Training of Trainers, Joint Citizen-Government Training, and CAG Mentoring

Formal training for CAG members is a core component of the ICAP process and is strengthened by the application of interactive participatory planning and management tools with both CAG members and staff present, which contributes to joint learning and practice. Training the trainers also enables established CAGs to transfer skills in project management and citizen advocacy through mentoring of new CAGs. This is carried out through joint training events where established CAGs showcase their results and talk about their strategies both formally and informally. Joint trainings with government representatives and CAGs, initiated in the third phase of ICAP programming, have proven to be especially effective.

Encourage the Participation of Women and Youth

The ICAP process encourages the participation of women and youth in CAG leadership where culturally acceptable. The increased emphasis on women in the third phase of ICAP has resulted in 140 female CAG members out of a total of 773. When participation is not culturally acceptable, ACIDI/VOCA has developed alternative ways

“Clearly established programmatic and administrative policies and procedures must be in place and enforced”

for the opinions of women and youth to be expressed. Two of the more successful tools are breakout resource-mapping exercises and summer youth camps. In some areas, after the first resource-mapping exercise was conducted, women and men were divided to conduct resource-mapping exercises without the presence of the other sex. Summer youth camps provide young Iraqis of both sexes with opportunities to learn about democracy, governance, and tolerance skills in a participatory and enjoyable environment. ACDI/VOCA has also developed youth apprenticeship programs, coordinated by CAGs, which give young people opportunities to develop their technical and professional skills while positively influencing the attitudes of youth and parents of youth about employment options.

Adopt a Decentralized Operational Approach

ICAP's decentralized approach to operations has been critical to its success. Decentralized teams comprising engineers, program officers, and monitoring and evaluation staff work out of one primary office and five satellite offices. With three major ethnic groups and languages (Arab, Turkman, and Kurd), and different levels of security present, operations had to be decentralized and human resource policies contextualized. Certain areas were unsafe for staff from particular backgrounds, so we proactively recruited a diverse staff to ensure that communities were supported by staff who could work without risk of harm. Experience dictates that staff members need to be reassigned to new communities from time to time to diffuse possible misperceptions that they may be favoring one ethnic or tribal group over another.

Use National Staff as Community Mobilizers

ACDI/VOCA considers its national staff—as many as 250 at any one time—a key resource in the community mobilization process. Many communities where ICAP is implemented are in areas that are unsafe for international staff as well as nonlocal national staff. Hiring national staff indigenous to a community builds trust within the targeted community; trust is critical for community engagement. The value of national staff to the community mobilization process should not be underestimated—national staff should be invested in to the greatest extent possible. More women are being hired as community mobilizers, which it is hoped will help raise the level of active female participation on CAGs as well as representation in local government.

Notes

1. The second and third ICAP phases were awarded in 2007 and 2008, respectively. ICAP's geographical area currently includes Diyala, Kirkuk, Ninawa, and Salah ad Din provinces of central and northern Iraq. Previous phases included three provinces under the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG)—Sulaymaniyah, Dohuk, and Erbil—and an additional non-KRG province—Al Anbar. Total project funding through October 2011 was over \$150 million.
2. The Consultative Services Delivery Initiative was carried out in the KRG province of Sulaymaniyah only. Total project funding was \$1,050,000; Consultative Services Delivery Projects I and II awards were \$5,000,000 each.
3. CAG members, members of community working groups, and project stakeholders are not allowed to interfere in the competitive bidding process in any way. Any changes in project specifications once a project is awarded are strongly discouraged; if changes are absolutely necessary, they must be submitted in writing. Companies related in any way to CAG members are strictly forbidden to participate in tenders.

Peer Mentoring: Training for Entrepreneurs in Southeast Europe

Peter Righi

The Center for Entrepreneurship and Executive Development (CEED) provides entrepreneurs and their executive teams in Bulgaria, Romania, Macedonia, Slovenia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Armenia with the know-how and networks they need to accelerate the growth of their small and medium-size enterprises. With support from USAID, CEED was established by the Small Enterprise Assistance Funds (SEAF), a global investment firm focused on providing growth capital and operational support to businesses in emerging markets and those underserved by traditional sources of capital.

CEED uses Top Class, a fee-based nine-month program that includes mentoring, coaching, entrepreneur-led training, and business-building networking sessions. In this situation, Top Class leveraged insights from more than 100 interviews with new and experienced entrepreneurs in the region, as well as from successful practices deployed at the USAID-sponsored U.S. Russian Center for Entrepreneurship. The program is led by successful local entrepreneurs who provide both the credibility and the connections that new entrepreneurs seek. Top Class participants put a high value on interacting with mentors/trainers with similar experiences who understand the environment. In the opinion of participants, entrepreneurs who have successfully mastered the challenges of the markets they face have more credibility and could offer more relevant strategies than entrepreneurs from outside the region. Moreover, Top Class participants are busy. If they dedicate time to the program, they want concrete returns in terms of enhanced ability to attract financing or secure new customers. The mentoring and associated networking sessions with other local entrepreneurs in Top Class provide this opportunity—an opportunity that a mentor from outside the region would be unlikely to provide.

CEED charges between €1500 and €2500 for the Top Class program, depending on locale, a relatively high price in a region where free and highly subsidized programs predominate. Data and experience show that fees must be imposed for the program to be judged valuable. Fees also challenge CEED to deliver on its promise.

Stefan Furlan, CEO of Optilab, is a Slovenia Top Class participant. Optilab helps companies manage fraud using high-technology products and solutions. Furlan won the 2009 Ljubljana Elevator Pitch sponsored by CEED, in which ten entrepreneurs competed to succinctly (in less than five minutes) present their companies and/or business proposition to potential investors. Furlan's CEED mentor was the sales director from Hermes Softlab, a well-known Slovene software firm. Through interactions over the course of a year, it became evident that Optilab's antifraud software would have broad applications and could be valuable to Hermes Softlab. The two parties ultimately signed a joint venture agreement for the development of product by Optilab for Hermes Softlab. The mentoring relationship allowed them to get to know one another, develop trust in one another, and eventually work on a project together. Furlan felt that his experience was a testament to the value of Top Class, explaining that not only did it help him better position his company, but it also provided the opportunity to meet individuals with valued local experience who could help him find new business opportunities.

The legacy of conflict in the region has left many business leaders with a noncollaborative and distrustful mindset. Top Class challenges this mindset by creating a community of entrepreneurs that enables co-operation and translates into stronger, more successful businesses.

Peter Righi is global director of the Center for Entrepreneurship and Executive Development, <http://www.ceed-global.org>.

Case Study 4

Building Collaborative Networks

Independent Radio Network in Sierra Leone

Ambrose James, Search for Common Ground

In 2002, Sierra Leone began the transition to a stable democracy with an election that marked the finale of a peace process started in 1996. Sierra Leone's history of problematic elections motivated a number of different domestic and international actors to collaborate in order to ensure that the 2002 elections would be free, fair, inclusive, and transparent. With assistance from Search for Common Ground (SFCG), this collaboration culminated in the Independent Radio Network (IRN), a group of radio stations that jointly subscribe to a code of conduct, and produce and share elections-related programming. SFCG played the role of a convener and supporter of the gradual development of the network, helping stations to identify common interests and providing resources as necessary to overcome obstacles and limitations. As the members of the network realized the benefits of the coalition and took greater responsibility for the activities of the network, SFCG steadily reduced its involvement, but continued to encourage the network members to achieve the full potential of the initiative.

Cooperation on Election Day Reporting and the Birth of IRN

In the build-up to the elections, elections watchers were concerned about transparency on polling day and how the results of the voting would be shared with the public. This was potentially a major problem for Sierra Leone, where the communication infrastructure was poor or nonexistent, roads were decrepit, and large areas of the country were out of touch with the capital city, where the National Electoral Commission (NEC) was based.

SFCG convened a meeting with various players in the information sector to discuss their respective roles on polling day. Those players included staff from the Ministry of Information, the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Service (SLBS), independent FM station managers, the UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) Public Information Unit, and Thompson Foundation/DFID (a bilateral agreement with the government had brought Thompson Foundation to Sierra Leone to conduct extensive training of journalists). It quickly became apparent that there were no coordinated efforts for disseminating voting information. Although both SLBS and UNAMSIL had established elections offices, they did not appear to be coordinating with each other or with the other players.

SLBS was planning to rely solely on the NEC for its updates, whereas UNAMSIL planned to collect information from its network of soldiers and offices around the country. The Ministry of Information and the NEC disagreed about who was in the lead in regards to disseminating information. SLBS, the national broadcaster, was perceived by many to be progovernment and unable to provide unbiased coverage.

SFCG noticed that the independent FM stations were frustrated by the lack of leadership and coordination, but were excited by the originality of reporting on election day and saw a niche to provide objective coverage. SFCG offered to serve as a venue for a meeting of just the station managers.

In this meeting, the independent FM station managers explored what was possible for them to do regarding election day reporting, considering their limited personnel and resources. The managers believed that elections were crucial to strengthening stability and democracy and that nonpartisan coverage of the results was essential. They agreed that reporting about election day should be consistent and independent of the government, and they understood that collaborative reporting provided protection, which would also maximize the minimal resources they had available. Andrew Kromah, executive director of Media Foundation for Peace and Development and owner of two FM stations, as well as a radio engineer with experience in setting up community radios, proposed linking stations together to provide an independent broadcast coverage of election day. SFCG provided the communication equipment needed for this step, but its primary role was to bring people together and facilitate conversations to encourage the exchange of ideas, helping to build consensus on the way forward, and documenting and disseminating the conclusions. As the SFCG director put it, "If no one was facilitating, all the ideas would be gone."

Excitement about the project intensified as planning proceeded. The station managers recognized the need for the initiative to have its own identity, to distinguish it clearly from other initiatives like those of UNAMSIL and SLBS. After debating a number of names, the group decided that the issue of independence should be brought to the fore and decided to call the effort the Independent Radio Network (IRN). The group created a coordinating team, with representatives from the stations and SFCG, charged with ensuring that all logistics, training, and accreditation were in place.

Coordinated Planning

In subsequent meetings, discussions centered on coordinating the implementation of a joint broadcast. Taking into account the different constituencies, range, and signal strength of the different stations, the managers decided that the stations in Freetown would all broadcast the same election day information, which would be aired through

one particular station. That station had wide coverage and listenership in Freetown and was centrally located, and its frequency could be captured by all the Freetown stations. SFCG's office in Freetown provided the facilities for a central news desk, making available telephone lines, a generator, computers, conference lines for on-the-spot broadcasts, and Internet connections to enable posting of results to a participating web news outlet. The three Freetown stations would have a joint editorial team working at this news desk for twenty hours per day. From the reporting, SFCG would prepare in its own studios to provide national election summaries that would be played at key points during the day. Another broadcast in the format of a magazine program, produced in two fifteen-minute segments, would allow for coverage of breaking news.

The coordinating team delegated responsibilities to each station, meeting regularly as election day approached. Radio Democracy, the Freetown coordinator, was responsible for interacting with the NEC and the deployment of reporters in Freetown. KISS FM 104, the Bo team leader, was responsible for engineering. SFCG took responsibility for logistics and national deployment as well as operations in Bo. Instead of trying to cover all five thousand polling stations, the coordinating team decided to deploy reporters to the twelve district headquarters and bigger cities that would collate the results from each district. SFCG staff augmented the 112 station staff deployed across the country. The team also assigned coordinators for the largest areas, with SFCG backstopping.

In planning discussions facilitated by SFCG, a consensus emerged that the group should take steps to ensure that all reporters clearly understood their role and knew how to focus their coverage. The coordinating team agreed to hold two training



The IRN Road Show visits Makeni, northern Sierra Leone, in March 2007. Outdoor broadcasting provides a platform for diverse public voices on elections issues. Photograph by Ransford Wright. Used with permission by IRN.

workshops in which SFCG would provide technical training to prepare the reporters for their work and an agreed-upon code of conduct. The workshops detailed the objectives of reporting and finalized planning for the operation. SFCG and the coordinating team developed a checklist and guidelines for reporting and personal conduct and provided final details on the modalities of reporting, such as how reporters would cover their different polling stations, when to call in, and what information to convey.

On election day, reports from the network of reporters in the provinces were fast and furious, with the network staff racing to keep up with the flow of information. The IRN aggregated results from individual polling stations and provided analysis on trends in each region.

At the end of the day, the coordinating team hosted a reception to celebrate and to recognize the efforts of all members of the network, highlighting the importance of the initiative. With SFCG's assistance, the team conducted a short evaluation with the key players to ensure that lessons learned would be incorporated into future collaborative work. The FM stations began planning how to build on this experience for independent national reporting, along the lines of National Public Radio in the United States.

Expansion of IRN Programming

The positive experience with reporting on local council elections inspired the station managers to continue their relationship, in particular, to monitor the activities of the new parliament. SFCG continued to facilitate conversations among the managers to encourage the sharing of new ideas. The managers thought that it was important to follow up on the electoral campaign promises and development agendas of the elected parliamentarians. The five members of the IRN decided to coproduce a program called *Parliament Bol At* (a local term referring to the dome of the Parliament Building, with the connotation that it has a view of everything that Parliament does). The program was designed to enhance the link between parliament members and their constituencies, and the editorial board ensured that the program addressed issues relevant to the communities of each member. Two producers, supported by SFCG, produced two thirty-minute programs that were to be played simultaneously on the five stations, with the radio stations providing free airtime. An editorial board composed of three station managers oversaw the process. The program was very popular; many parliamentarians sought out the producers to share their thoughts on current issues. The production of *Parliament Bol At* thus created new incentives for the stations to work together.

When local council elections were scheduled for 2004, the IRN started planning its coverage, recognizing in discussions facilitated by SFCG that a legitimate electoral result at the local level was vital to the authority of the decentralization process. When the voter registration process got off to a very slow start, the five member stations

discussed with SFCG how to enhance the process of participation. The network determined that it needed to expand its geographical reach. Given the proliferation of new radio stations and their expressed enthusiasm for joining the network, IRN invited five stations to join, which gave it coverage equal to or surpassing that of the state radio network. These ten stations were organized according to the 2002 elections model, with stations linked together to create a national broadcast. The stations pooled their resources (radio station equipment, staff, production expertise) with SFCG to enhance the public information available on the decentralization process, voter education, and the roles and responsibilities of local councils.

The success of the local council election reporting encouraged members to take steps to expand the network's activities. They agreed to produce an elections follow-up program similar to *Parliament Bol At*, a five-part series on the first 100 days of district and town councils. The program would cover both individual councils in the provinces and overall trends and issues from a national perspective. It was produced by IRN members, drawing on local coverage, and aired on all the member stations, further strengthening the network by providing a national outlook on regional issues.

The advantages of the network in providing effective programming on the transition to democracy were clear:

- The synergy of programming enabled members to cover events, trends, and processes across the entire country, a huge task for which individual stations lacked capacity. Stations generally have low-capacity transmitters that cover limited areas. The network reached large populations in all regions.
- The contribution of inputs into the network programming extended the reach of each station. In a sense, the voices moved from provincial to national as they were heard in all corners of the country. The public respect and trust for the IRN enhanced credibility, and the public profiles of many small stations were raised in the process.
- As member stations continued interactions and spoke with a collective voice, they found that a high level of unity had developed among them. Stations that had operated as lone organizations began to share experiences and challenges, leading to the exchange of resources at crucial times. The country-wide deployment of staff for election coverage exposed many reporters to parts of the country outside their traditional bases. This enabled them to know the country better and to report in a more informed and professional way.

SFCG's role in this process was not to drive the development of the network but to identify opportunities for collaboration and to create a forum in which the stations could engage each other and recognize common interests. As the stations became intent on collaboration, SFCG provided capacity that the stations lacked in terms of facilities,

resources, and expertise, and gradually backed away from a leading role as the stations developed their own capacity.

Formalizing the Network

From 2004 to 2006, the IRN formalized the network. The members convened a general assembly to document lessons learned for future operations and appointed a national coordinator to administer the network. Much later, the general assembly appointed a six-person board of local and international experts that would support IRN's strategic direction, fundraising, and vision and created a strategic management team made up of local board members to support the coordinator. Recently, the general assembly agreed to decentralize coordination and authority. The elected four regional coordinators (one each from the north, east, south, and west) from its membership to assist the national coordinator and to reinforce ownership and collaborative decision making.

IRN Code of Conduct and Ethics Committee

As the IRN expanded, members recognized a need to put in place clear standards for reporting. With SFCG's technical assistance, the network developed a code of conduct that station boards and managers were required to sign and follow. The IRN formed an ethics committee to ensure compliance with the code; this committee comprised representatives from each region and two prominent and credible citizens from outside the network. Any stations applying to join the network had to submit a formal letter to the national coordinator, with the ethics committee vetting applications and making assessment visits to applicants and a final review by the general assembly.

The ethics committee instituted monitoring mechanisms, traveling around the country to monitor station compliance with the code of conduct. SFCG provided some support for the travel expenses for these visits, but the committee members' home stations absorbed the cost of their time. The committee held meetings with both station staff and the community to provide training on appropriate reporting behavior and to hear complaints, reporting any problems or violations to the general assembly for action. This internal monitoring mechanism was very effective—all the stations wanted to avoid being named and shamed—or even suspended from the network—for infringement of the code.

Solidarity and Political Cover

Perhaps most significantly, the network created a sense of solidarity and a mechanism for protection against intimidation by local politicians by showing that even small, potentially vulnerable stations are part of a larger network and can draw on its support. For example, there were a number of conflicts between newly elected local councils and some IRN members about reporting and editorial policies, especially reporting on

accountability. The IRN, with the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists, was quick to intervene in clarifying roles and responsibility and protecting member stations from political capture. In addition, the network's national programming structure took direct responsibility for reporting out of individual stations' control, thereby shielding stations from reprisals.

Rotation of the General Assembly

As the membership expanded from ten to sixteen members, the IRN decided to rotate general assembly meetings among the member stations. The rotations made each member station feel an equal member of the network and provided an opportunity for board, management, and staff to meet communities and explain the role of the IRN. An IRN visit stimulated pride and excitement among individual communities that their local stations were involved in a national, high-profile effort. Furthermore, the rotation encouraged station representatives to travel outside their own area to other parts of the country. The high visibility of the visits also reinforced the solidarity of the network to politicians who might be tempted to pressure individual stations.

Efforts to institutionalize the network created the structures and processes needed for the IRN's continued expansion and professionalization. SFCCG's role throughout this process was to highlight the opportunities and advantages of networking, pointing out areas in which the group could enhance its professionalism and providing institutional options and models for the group to adopt.

Capacity Building for New Programming

In November 2005, SFCCG hired Developing Radio Partners (DRP) as consultants with the goal of creating a plan for developing the community radio sector that included professional development of the station and a structure to secure sustainability. DRP worked with affiliated radio and television production personnel from the private and public sector, community members, government and NGO officials, print journalists, and media stakeholders to develop a strategy for strengthening a national network. The IRN used the recommendations of the report as a road map for its development.

In early 2006, the IRN received donor funding through MFPD (a founding member of the network) to provide a central hub for gathering news stories from around the country and making the stories accessible for broadcast by local radio stations. The IRN, which had until then used SFCCG facilities, set up office space provided by MFPD, recruited production staff, and moved program development from the SFCCG site to the new IRN studios under the supervision of the IRN national coordinator. The network adopted a policy that member station staff would work in the central production hub on a rotating basis as a way to build program production and digital editing capacity as well as to ensure diverse voices on the national broadcast.

A key recommendation of the DRP was to build the capacity of the IRN leadership and its affiliate station staff. The network wanted to produce a national news program based on community station reporting that would be broadcasted back to communities through the network. In response to that interest, SFCG hired a consultant to coach station staff on nationalizing community radio news reports, launching the *IRN National News*. Produced from the IRN studio, the sixteen IRN stations contributed stories to each weekly program, helping to consolidate the community radio sector, improve the watchdog role of the news media, and end the isolation felt by many Sierra Leone residents who knew little about what was happening in other parts of their country. The show used a magazine approach to maximize the reporting knowledge at community stations without relying entirely on limited upcountry station capacity to produce audio field reports. The stations submitting news items were always identified, preserving the program's grassroots character.

2007 Elections and Future Directions

As the 2007 presidential and general elections approached, more stations applied to join the IRN and membership expanded to twenty-one members. The IRN began developing its election day strategy six months prior to the elections from its new base and studio, collaborating with both SFCG and the NEC. The IRN national coordinator and the strategic management team directly supervised the rollout of the strategy. The network continued its general assembly meetings and created a platform for the membership to set priorities for issues around the electoral process at both the national and the regional level. Afterwards, local and international observers described the elections as transparent, free, and fair. The IRN was a significant factor in this success.

With the success of the 2007 election coverage, the IRN shifted its focus to providing objective and diverse reporting for the 2008 local council elections and an initiative to promote women's participation in local elections; it eventually adopted a focus on postelection violence and the development plans of the various councils. In terms of institutional development, the IRN continues to expand its membership to achieve the benefits of diversity, and supports emerging stations to obtain licenses. In April 2009, the IRN set up a website (<<http://www.irnsierraleone.org>>) to boost its profile, membership, and work. It is equipping station staffers with the advocacy skills required to engage regulatory and policy institutions and expanding the operating space for the IRN and the media as an institution. As the 2012 elections approach, the membership has expanded, with four new stations bringing the total number of members to twenty-five. The IRN has also developed a comprehensive media strategy for this crucial election that has been shared with various stakeholders. The IRN is building relationships with other media stakeholders such as the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists, the Community Radio Network, and the Independent Media Commission, and is looking at ways to share its networking model in other countries.

Exchanging Skills: USIP Conflict Management Training in Pakistan

Nina Sughrue

Seeking to emulate USIP's success in building networks of facilitators in Iraq and Afghanistan, USIP's Academy for International Conflict Management and Peacebuilding began in 2009 to develop a network of conflict managers in Pakistan. The goal for the Pakistan program is to develop a self-expanding network of Pakistani civil society leaders, journalists, law enforcement personnel, local government officials, private-sector leaders, religious scholars, academics, and lawyers who will conduct conflict management training workshops, organize local dialogues, and mediate disputes throughout the country.

Working with a local partner, the Sustainable Peace and Development Organization (SPADO), the Academy has (as of early 2012) conducted four workshops for approximately ninety-three Pakistanis from the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Sindh Province, and Karachi.

The training sessions were treated as an exchange of skills, with USIP trainers learning from their Pakistani counterparts as well as sharing their own techniques. The Academy worked with participants to strengthen their training and mediation techniques and to facilitate a process in which participants advise each other, opening the doors for increased collaboration among the diverse set of actors. In between USIP-funded workshops, SPADO keeps track of the group and interviews network members on their conflict management and training work; details of their activities are then published in a newsletter that is distributed to network members as well as to like-minded organizations in Pakistan. The newsletters have been an essential tool in keeping the members engaged and connected. To date, five newsletters have been published.

During the first workshop, Academy trainers presented modules that covered such subjects as conflict analysis, negotiation, mediation, problem solving, facilitation techniques, and how to train others in these skills. The workshop was highly interactive and included role-playing exercises and group work.

Because conflict is so culturally specific in Pakistan, Academy trainers wanted to ensure that the participants would relate to the subjects they had just been taught, take ownership of the materials they had been given, and build relationships among themselves. Therefore, at the end of the first workshop, participants were broken up into seven groups and—as a form of homework to be completed before the second workshop—each group was asked to put together a training module on one of the topics taught in the workshop. An agenda group was also created and given the responsibility of coordinating with the other groups. SPADO met regularly with the groups to ensure that they stayed on track during the intervening months.

At the second workshop, which was run by the agenda group, the groups effectively trained one another, each group presenting its module to all the other participants.

The third workshop was an advanced mediation workshop. The workshop covered advanced conflict analysis, conflict ripeness, mediator readiness, and problem-solving skills. After every training module, each participant used a worksheet to apply what he or she had just been taught to a conflict in his or her community. Participants were then divided into groups, in which they discussed their individual work and selected one of their conflicts to present to the entire workshop. The groups were based on location, the goal being to enable participants to build

relationships with participants from neighboring areas and then to use those relationships to address conflicts in their communities. Participants left the workshop with their own plans for analyzing local conflict, assessing conflict ripeness, determining mediator readiness, and taking action. Action plans focused on small, tangible steps the participants could take immediately to help prevent and/or resolve conflicts in their communities.

The fourth workshop expanded the network into Sindh province, focusing on Sindh's capital, Karachi. Karachi, the financial hub of Pakistan, is riddled with a diverse set of problems, including political, ethnic, and socioeconomic conflicts. A major goal of the workshop was to build trust among participants, as well as to develop their capacity to resolve conflicts nonviolently.

Academy trainers ran the workshop with the help of three KP and FATA participants from earlier workshops. This approach served both to develop the capacity of original network members and to connect KP and FATA network member with the Sindh participants. With ethnic problems being a major source of conflict in Karachi, connecting network members from different ethnic groups and geographical locations is critical for the success of the network.

Academy trainers also invited SPADO to lead some of the modules in the fourth workshop, thereby increasing SPADO's training capacity, which is essential if the program is to be sustainable.

The Pakistan network of conflict managers has registered a number of practical successes in the Pashtu tribal areas of FATA, the Swat valley of KP, and in Sindh Province. In FATA and KP, the facilitators have peacefully resolved two land conflicts and managed another land conflict nonviolently. The KP and FATA facilitators have also helped achieve peaceful settlements in three other conflicts: one that divided several NGOs along ethnic lines, a second that concerned humanitarian assistance to flood victims, and a third that focused on jurisdictional disputes between two journalist unions. In Sindh Province, the network members are conducting conflict resolution training at the University of Karachi, at local NGOs, and in their communities. Network members also mediated a peaceful end to a dispute between two families from the same village who were armed and ready to take violent revenge against each other.

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Case Study 5

Participatory Stakeholder Evaluation Evaluation of the Chevron, State Government, and Community Relationships in the Niger Delta

David Plumb

Oil production in Nigeria's Niger Delta region has been marked by decades of strained relationships between host communities, oil companies, and the Nigerian government. Vast quantities of oil, valued at billions of dollars, are pumped each year from the swampy lowlands. Yet, despite the revenue generated by oil exports, much of the population remains mired in extreme poverty.

Many communities claim they have seen little or no benefit from the tapping of natural resources by the federal government and its multinational oil company partners. Relationships have been further strained by the emergence of violent groups in the swamps that have sabotaged oil installations and kidnapped company workers.

Since 2008, the Consensus Building Institute (CBI) has been working with Chevron Nigeria Limited and its Niger Delta stakeholders to improve and strengthen their relationships. The work has brought together community leaders, the company, government representatives, and local nonprofits to produce credible information about development impacts. CBI assisted stakeholders impacted by Chevron's oil extraction in the Niger Delta to conduct an intensive evaluation of a core component of Chevron Nigeria Limited's community engagement strategy, commonly known as the global memoranda of understanding (GMOUs). GMOUs are intended to promote development and have governed many aspects of the company's relationship with Niger Delta communities.

The evaluation used a highly participatory approach in which stakeholders were directly involved in and responsible for the design and implementation of the evaluation as well as the analysis of results. This design aimed to maximize credible, public information for future decision making around the GMOUs. The evaluation team focused on the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the GMOUs as well as stakeholders' suggestions for improvement.



Austin Onuoha (in orange) leads a data collection team visiting a Niger Delta community in June-July 2008 as part of a participatory stakeholder evaluation of development agreements. Photograph by Paulinus Okoro. Used with permission by the Africa Centre for Corporate Responsibility.

Evaluating Chevron's GMOUs

In 2005, Chevron changed its approach to engaging communities impacted by its onshore oil operations. Chevron signed a series of GMOUs with eight clusters of communities and their corresponding state governments. Under these GMOUs, each cluster created a regional development council that took primary responsibility for identifying and implementing community development projects using funds contributed by Chevron. The new approach was intended to promote community-led development and improve relationships. The three-year agreements were a significant change from the company's previous approach, and stakeholders had a variety of opinions about the shift.

Before the initial agreements were to expire, Chevron asked CBI to lead an innovative, participatory evaluation of the GMOUs. From June through August 2008, a diverse group of stakeholders directly involved in the GMOU process—including representatives from communities, Nigeria’s government, local NGOs, and Chevron—jointly designed and implemented the evaluation.

The evaluation was the first comprehensive analysis of the GMOUs’ functioning. The findings reflected the divergent perspectives that emerged from stakeholders on specific issues. The analysis did not seek to reconcile these different viewpoints, but rather to review and understand them. Moreover, the evaluation sought to identify general themes about the GMOU process expressed in the interviews and to gain an overall understanding of how the process could be strengthened, rather than evaluate the specific performance or projects of individual regional development councils.

Fundamentally, the evaluation aimed to provide credible, public information for future decision making around the GMOUs, which were slated for renegotiation within the following twelve months. To achieve credibility, the process had to involve stakeholders.

Participatory Stakeholder Evaluation Methodology

Stakeholders involved in the GMOU process carried out the planning and analysis of this evaluation. Representatives from the regional development councils; state, local, and national government; Chevron; and local NGOs designed the evaluation jointly, assisted in the collection of data, and analyzed the results as a group. Although Chevron convened participants and funded the effort, an independent facilitation team helped the group manage discussions and decision making.

The facilitation team was drawn from three organizations. CBI led the evaluation effort; SFCG provided facilitation support and expertise in conflict issues; and Research Triangle Institute provided expertise in governance and development issues as well as assisted with workshop facilitation.¹ CBI was responsible for writing the final report and ensuring that it accurately reflected findings.

The facilitation team sought to guide a process that was perceived as legitimate by all stakeholder groups. This perceived legitimacy did not exist at the beginning of the evaluation effort, given the history of strained relationships and the fact that Chevron had convened the exercise and paid for the facilitators. The facilitators built legitimacy over time with two main strategies:

- Developing a roadmap that maximized ownership and control by participants
- Prioritizing “fairness” as a guiding principle for every step, even at the expense of efficiency, speed, and depth of analysis

The team used a variety of techniques to implement these strategies, which are discussed below.

To encourage collaboration among stakeholders in the process, the facilitation team explicitly sought to separate the evaluation exercise from upcoming GMOU renegotiations. This meant avoiding the temptation to seek definitive, unanimous conclusions from the analysis or to treat the evaluation as an “audit” or “judgment” of the GMOUs. Rather, the primary goal was to survey the full range of views expressed and to clarify salient themes. During the analysis phase, participants in the evaluation were encouraged to make recommendations about the kinds of issues that needed greater focus and discussion in the negotiation, but not determine exactly what should be done about those issues. This approach allowed the evaluation to be a group learning exercise rather than a bargaining session.

Planning Phase

In the first phase of the process, Chevron convened stakeholder representatives to plan the evaluation process. The representatives developed the goals of the evaluation, a data-collection strategy, and interview protocols in planning workshops.

As convener of the evaluation, Chevron selected the participants. This was a potential weakness of the process because participant selection was a significant decision over which stakeholders did not have a say. The team addressed this challenge through an exercise in which participants identified voices that were not in the room. Participants then designed strategies to reach out to those voices during the data-collection phase. In feedback forms, participants cited this discussion as one of the most important of the first planning workshop.

The first planning workshop started with a visioning exercise to help participants focus on the possibility of positive change and improvement. Facilitators then prompted the group to articulate why an evaluation might be a worthwhile step toward construction of this vision. The workshop goals emerged from this discussion:

- Provide credible information about the strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement of the GMOU process.
- Create a shared understanding of what occurred under the GMOUs.
- Develop a shared set of recommendations about how to improve the process.

Several participants had experience with previous evaluations. A discussion about this experience led to agreement on the principles that should guide this evaluation. The

group determined that the evaluation would be carried out in a participatory, inclusive, and transparent way to ensure that it achieved these goals and that stakeholder representatives would participate in all stages of the evaluation.

One of the challenges of the evaluation was to identify the elements of the GMOUs that were working and should be strengthened. This approach of building on strengths, often referred to as “appreciative inquiry,” ran the risk of being laughable in the Niger Delta context, or worse, perceived as a ploy by Chevron to cover up real problems. Yet the approach became a key tool for the facilitators to generate a mental shift that permitted participants to identify opportunities for action and improvement.

The first planning workshop developed a list of several dozen potential questions that the evaluation would answer, as well as the stakeholders who would be contacted to answer the questions. A second workshop refined the list into a questionnaire with eleven questions. The second workshop, which began with the same type of discussions as the first to generate participant buy-in, also resulted in a detailed plan for reaching out to stakeholders during data collection.

Data-Collection Phase

The data-collection phase of the evaluation occurred over five weeks during June and July 2008. One of the facilitators, a Nigerian who lives and works in the Niger Delta, selected a team of twenty-eight trained data collectors drawn from local NGOs. Using the interview protocol developed in the planning workshops, the data-collection team members conducted eighty-seven interviews and focus groups in all eight Regional Development Council (RDC) areas, involving more than one thousand individuals. Using contacts and guidance from the workshop participants, the team covered all five states where the GMOUs are present and visited more than twenty rural Niger Delta communities, mostly by boat.

Other participatory stakeholder evaluations have used workshop participants themselves to conduct interviews and focus groups. In this evaluation, the facilitation team chose to use professionals from local NGOs due to the complexity of the terrain and the short time frame in which to complete data collection.

Before starting the interviews, data collectors participated in a two-day orientation session about the participatory stakeholder evaluation process and their role as data collectors. The training focused on interviewing and note-taking techniques, as well as familiarizing data collectors with the interview protocol.

“The approach of building on strengths . . . became a key tool for the facilitators to generate mental shift”

Community focus groups formed the core of the data-collection effort. In many communities, data collectors held separate focus groups with youth, women, and men. Other communities preferred to hold open town forums. Typically, one data collector guided the focus group conversation while two or more data collectors took notes.



Data collectors prepare to conduct a women's focus group in the Niger Delta. Photograph by Paulinus Okoro. Used with permission by the Africa Centre for Corporate Responsibility.

The team also conducted individual and focus group interviews with government representatives, RDC leadership, and NGOs involved in the GMOU process. Chevron participants in the planning workshops interviewed Chevron managers and staff in an effort to promote frank discussion. Workshop participants suggested this approach after considering how to make different stakeholders feel as comfortable as possible in the interviews. Members of the workshop facilitation team interviewed representatives from international donors by phone.

To promote a candid sharing of perspectives, data collectors told interviewees and focus group participants that their comments would not be attributed by name, though participants were encouraged to allow their names to be listed in an annex to the report.

Analysis Phase

In the third phase of the evaluation, participants from the planning workshops returned in late July and early August to form an evaluation team to analyze the interview and focus group data.

To promote constructive dialogue, the evaluation team focused its analysis on the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the GMOUs as well as stakeholders' suggestions for improvement. The evaluation brought to light diverse views among Niger Delta stakeholders, ranging from positive comments about GMOU impacts and processes to deep frustration and anger over participation and the equitable distribution of benefits.

The key strategy used to build legitimacy during the analysis phase was to focus attention on raw data. Workshops became a learning exercise in which stakeholders, sitting side by side, poured over interview notes in search of critical issues and common themes. Participants were so intrigued by interviews with Chevron staff that they took stacks of notes back to the hotel at night to continue reading. They were stunned when notes from a community women's group revealing perspectives that many people in the room previously hadn't heard were read aloud.

Interviews and focus groups were separated into stakeholder categories (women, men/elders, youth, traditional leaders, government, Chevron, NGOs); participants, working in small groups, generated a "gallery" of key findings written on flipcharts pasted around the room. The small groups explained their findings to the full group, and then participants reviewed interviews and double-checked each other's findings. The facilitation team compiled the findings each evening into a consolidated chart presented to the full group the next day. After three and a half days, the first workshop had a fourteen-page summary chart of findings.

Specific Findings of the Evaluation

Among its key findings, the evaluation team noted that many stakeholders believed GMOUs were more effective at promoting sustainable development, more transparent, and more able to give communities ownership of the development process than previous strategies. A large number of stakeholders said Chevron Nigeria's relationship with communities had improved under the GMOUs.

Nearly all stakeholders said that GMOU funding was inadequate for the extensive needs of Niger Delta communities. Coordination with government and other development actors needed significant improvement, as did communication about the initiative between community representatives and community stakeholders. Initial projects were slow to implement, causing some stakeholders to lose faith in the process.

Many community members said they did not feel the process was transparent enough or representative of their interests. Nearly all stakeholders noted that women were largely excluded from the process. Youth and traditional leaders expressed a range of views about the GMOUs, including significant anger and frustration. A few communities said they wanted to pull out of the agreements. Most community members agreed that conflict resolution mechanisms intended to address disputes were not functioning or functioning poorly.

A second workshop refined and enhanced the summary based on further detailed review of the interview and focus group transcripts. Participants also discussed how they would use the findings of the evaluation in their organizations as a basis for strengthening the GMOU process. RDC chairmen, government representatives, CNL staff, and NGO representatives split into separate groups to come up with next steps. The practical steps they developed (e.g., “Include women in councils and give them responsible positions”) showed a willingness to act on the evaluation findings even before formal negotiation to renew the GMOUs began. The steps also demonstrated enhanced capacity among all stakeholders to be reflective about the challenges they faced and to develop practical action steps based on joint learning.

Conclusion

Participants in the evaluation expressed enthusiasm for the participatory approach used to conduct the process. They also expressed a strong willingness to continue using dialogue and joint problem solving to strengthen the engagement between CNL and its Niger Delta stakeholders through the GMOU process.

The experience appears to have shifted attitudes among many stakeholders about how to engage each other around difficult issues and provided some skills for more collaborative approaches. This shift was evident in the renegotiation of the eight GMOUs, which began in late 2008. Community representatives and Chevron jointly invited CBI to serve as a neutral facilitator of the negotiations. CBI, along with a Nigerian partner organization, kicked off the process with joint training in mutual gains negotiation. CBI led the parties through a structured negotiation process that would have been all but unthinkable a year earlier. The evaluation findings served as the guiding document to inform these negotiations.

The evaluation experience and subsequent negotiations provided an opportunity for communities and Chevron to turn a potentially confrontational and explosive interaction into an exercise that enhanced relationships and understanding. It is a hopeful sign pointing to the potential for constructive action in a region suffering from years of violent confrontation.

Note

1. The facilitation team included Merrick Hoben, David Kovick, and Jide Olagunju from CBI (<<http://www.cbuilding.org>>); David Plumb and Austin Onuoha from SFGC (<<http://www.sfcg.org>>); and Barbara Rodey, Dan Goetz, and Dan Gerber from the Research Triangle Institute (<<http://www.rti.org>>). Austin Onuoha also led the data-collection team.

Adversarial Capacity Building

A. Heather Coyne

Just as the Niger Delta case study included stakeholders in the process of evaluating a project, exposing the project to criticism and making opposition an integral, constructive part of the project, other interventions could benefit from integrating an “adversarial” relationship into programming.

The Coalition military forces in Iraq had a number of opportunities to build capacity through their own routine interaction with local actors rather than through dedicated capacity-building initiatives. For example, in the aftermath of the Abu Ghraib scandal, several Iraqi human rights organizations and ex-prisoner associations volunteered to serve as monitors for the Coalition-run prisons, to oversee the conditions there, and to report back to the Iraqi people. At the same time, the new Iraqi local councils that worked closely with Coalition forces were eager to provide information to the families of detainees on their status, providing a service to their constituents.

In both cases, these interactions could have served a capacity-building purpose, helping NGOs and local councils learn how to interact effectively with military forces, strengthening advocacy, public diplomacy, and watchdog skills through the interaction, and building their legitimacy with their own communities. Such interactions provided a unique opportunity to provide “learning through doing” in a relatively safe environment, through an adversarial approach—but with a relatively congenial adversary. Local actors could have developed skills sets by questioning and pressing the Coalition military—which sincerely wanted the local organizations to succeed—before they attempted the same activities with Iraqi military forces and other authorities less familiar with, or less tolerant of, the role of watchdogs.

Although these opportunities were largely missed, the military did create such an adversarial capacity-building opportunity in its interactions with local councils on the status of neighborhood security arrangements. Because Coalition forces were heavily involved in the development of the local councils and responsible for local security in the early days of the operation, it was natural for military units to brief the councils in their areas of operation on the security situation. The councils developed an expectation of hearing from the military regularly on security, as well as a certain comfort level with the questioning process and making recommendations on security issues. As the military gradually transitioned responsibility for security arrangements to Iraqi police, the councils transferred these expectations and expertise to the Iraqi authorities. This was not a consistent success, but in some areas the process became institutionalized; police commanders still regularly meet with local representatives to provide information on neighborhood security and to get input and assistance from them.

The Coalition forces often did not consciously think of themselves as training the councils to demand oversight of security issues, nor did they actively shape the capacity of the councils to ask good questions to develop effective mechanisms for interviewing security forces. But because the military assumed the councils should be involved and did its best to inform the councils of its own actions, the councils responded to the opportunity and gradually improved their capacity in oversight. During the transition of authority to Iraqi forces, the military pressured Iraqi police and other authorities to be as responsive to the councils as it had been, smoothing the way for councils to transition their new skills to their own authorities. If intervening forces could treat all their “adversarial” engagements with host nation citizens as capacity-building opportunities, viewing them in the context of building essential democratic skill sets as opposed to a challenge to their authority, this mind-set could dramatically enhance the sustainability of democratic processes, as well as improve relations with local actors.

A. Heather Coyne served for fifteen months in Iraq as a U.S. Army Reserve civil affairs officer, assigned to the Coalition Provisional Authority to support Iraqi civil society. She was the chief of party for the United States Institute of Peace’s activities in Iraq in 2003-5.

Conclusion

Keys to Engagement

A. Heather Coyne

The case studies cover a wide range of third-party interventions in conflict zones that focused on social and economic development to reduce the drivers of conflict. Although in all cases the interveners used a combination of methods to empower local actors, each case illustrates a key engagement methodology.

In spite of the vastly different contexts, approaches, and priorities of each case, common themes are evident. This section examines these themes. Intervenors should consider incorporating components discussed here into the design of future conflict interventions.

Focus on Process, Not Outcomes

The most significant theme that characterizes each case study is a focus on process rather than outcomes. These cases all emphasize the development of processes in which effective decision making, relationship building, or learning can take place when the emphasis is not simply on the result of an intervention. In each case, the intervention was designed to make interaction among participants as productive as possible, with the participants determining final decisions and outcomes.

Intervenors can facilitate process development by ensuring that participants are representative of all stakeholders, that they come to the process with a sense of enthusiasm or receptiveness, that the environment for discussion is safe for participation, that relevant technical expertise is available for participants to draw on, that incentives exist for advancing the agenda, and that resources are available to put plans into action. Within that framework, the case studies address some specific considerations.

Trust Building

Most of these interventions started with some form of trust building, rather than jumping immediately to collaboration or to addressing issues. Intervenors should not expect actors in a conflict to work together before they have established a basis and a motivation for doing so. These interventions often aspired to early successes that would build momentum and enthusiasm for the process, starting with relatively easy

wins before tackling more involved aspects. Interactions were also framed in terms of “learning” and “research” rather than negotiations and bargaining.

Local Priorities

In most of these cases, interveners provided a general framework of support but the participants themselves decided what substantive issues to tackle. Some interventions provided more guidance, such as ICAP’s resource-mapping exercise followed by project development and BLTP’s simulations and exercises. Others, such as the Guatemalan dialogue, provided a topic and let participants develop their own discussion of it. In Sierra Leone, SFCCG identified an area of common concern and convened forums in which the local actors could pursue discussions. In the Niger Delta, participants took a role in developing the process themselves, but CBI provided extensive guidance on the overall structure of the review.

The interventions all involved a willingness to trust local actors to define what they want to do and a recognition that outsiders cannot know or determine the right outcome for them. At the same time, interveners cannot be naïve about the fact that local actors have many different agendas, including ones advanced by hostile, regressive, or criminal elements. Successful interventions will happen where broad local priorities intersect with the broad objectives of the interveners and where local actors have space to explore and define the specifics of those broad priorities.

Rules of Procedure

Methodology and rules of procedure are not technical issues but can be used to shape the tone of the interaction. In Guatemala, the interveners used procedural rules to enhance the legitimacy of the project by showing that no one interest group would be singled out.

Inclusiveness

One aspect of process facilitation where interveners may add value is in ensuring diverse and representative participation. Intervenors should avoid taking the path of least resistance in selection of participants, where selection is made on the basis of recommendations by trusted partners. The Burundi case demonstrates clearly why extended investment in the selection process, both to get the right actors and to ensure inclusiveness, is worth the effort. In the case studies, interveners avoided the use of quotas and took the time to recruit a diversity of participants or to explain the advantages of inclusiveness to local actors who were managing the selection. In Burundi, the organizers chose from among the large number of stakeholder suggestions to ensure a balance. In the Niger Delta, inclusiveness was a weakness of the original invitation process, so the facilitators addressed it directly by having the participants

identify “missing voices” and develop ways to reach out to them during the data-collection effort. In Guatemala, the project team gradually expanded the invitation to key actors in the state and society so that by the time hardliners and spoilers were invited, the project was a fact and enough important figures had already committed, making missing out on it undesirable.

During implementation, some projects tried to ensure that each leadership position was assigned to a “consensus” candidate, while others, such as the Guatemala project, distributed leading roles across groupings so that each group had a chance to be in the lead on a different issue. One mechanism to include controversial actors is to invite them in their personal capacity rather than as representatives of an institution.

Coalition Building

One goal of a relationship-building process might be to establish sustained networks with power to act in unison for advocacy purposes—bringing pressure to bear on governments, combatants, or communities as a coalition rather than as individuals. Interveners can assist, as SFGC and CEED did, by creating forums where like-minded groups can share agendas and find common interests, and, in later stages, by offering training in advocacy skills (rather than defining the agenda) so that coalitions can be more effective in lobbying for their cause.

Continuing Activity

It is important for local actors to see how their activities might continue beyond the initial involvement. Most of the case studies involved open-ended processes, in which participants could develop further and in new directions. Even for processes that had a more defined ending, such as the completion of a project under ICAP, mechanisms were provided for continued interaction so that the momentum created did not have a chance to fade. Some ICAP CAGs have continued to implement projects following the ICAP methodology but with nondonor funds.

Ground Rule Development as a Model for Process

Many organizations begin interactions between local actors with agreement on ground rules for an interaction as a way of building participant ownership of the process. Some provide a list of commonly used rules and ask participants to make refinements. Others ask participants to create rules from scratch, using questions such as “What behaviors will help us have a constructive conversation?” to solicit suggestions. This approach may take a while but has the advantage of direct participation and ownership of the rules. Organizers should consider the time, purpose of the session, degree of conflict within the group, and how skilled the participants are at group interaction to determine the best balance.

One practitioner advises, “Most ground rules are really subsets of a very few main rules such as ‘treat each other with respect’ and ‘be open to new perspectives.’ Even when participants come up with tons of rules, such as with respect to cell phone usage, speaking one at a time, listening to others, being on time, etc., I find they fit into these main categories. I like to keep it simple, yet still let them craft the rules. So I do something like ask permission of them to reframe their rule only slightly, and from there, ask if it is ok if I fit something else into that category.”

In some contexts, the term “ground rules” might not be appropriate, so organizers might refer to “process agreements” or “group guidelines” instead. It is also helpful to have the participants select someone to enforce the rules (within reason).

Whenever interveners ask for input—for ground rules or other interactions—it is important that they be comfortable with long periods of silence. It may take time for participants to gather their thoughts or their courage to speak. If interveners move too quickly to fill the silence with their own suggestions, they will miss the chance for participants to drive the discussion. In fact, an extended silence can help encourage participants to comment if the intervener makes no move to continue without their input.

Allow Sufficient Time

Closely linked to the emphasis on process is the need to allow sufficient time for changes in behavior to take hold. Relationships take time to build; a decision-making process must run through its full cycle several times before people can fully grasp all the implications; people must have a chance to learn for themselves and to see consequences play out. Leaders elected to local councils, as in the Niger Delta, may not understand the importance of delivering on community development projects until they see the consequences in the next election cycle. Some activities, such as institution building, may require years of evolution. The Independent Radio Network developed over many years.

This is not to say that interveners should plan only for long-term projects. Quick results may be possible in some cases, but interveners should consider the long-term impact of these projects. Although some cases, such as ICAP, were intended to be quick impact projects, they also encouraged the adoption of a decision-making process and norms for community participation in the longer term—the infrastructure improvements were almost a side benefit to that more significant achievement. Lessons learned from ICAP may provide an option for those struggling to balance long-term requirements with the equally valid pressure to show improvements quickly in order to build support for the longer-term effort: invest in long-term processes that can provide short-term results.

Choosing Implementing Partners

One implication of the imperative to use long time horizons is that interveners will need a mechanism for sustained contact and on-the-ground support. The development of a process or relationship requires nurturing that is inconsistent with a “parachute in and out” approach. However, many interveners do not have the capacity to maintain local offices to provide such support. Partnering arrangements with local organizations or local project managers such as those used by the Institute and BLTP are useful, but in such cases, the intervener should consider both its relationship with those partners and the partners’ relationship with participants in the context of empowerment. Interveners should choose partners carefully and invest in partnering organizations to ensure they follow empowerment principles in their dealings with their fellow citizens. CBI dedicated extensive time to fostering empowerment techniques at multiple levels (with the facilitation team, the evaluation process team, the data collectors, and the interviewees themselves). ICAP selected mobilizers based on their ability to relate to the communities. The Institute selected an Afghan partner whose own style was compatible with developing the leadership of local organizations.

Utilize Empowerment-Focused Learning Approaches

In some cases, interveners ask local actors to make decisions on issues on which they have little familiarity or expertise. It is part of empowerment to share knowledge that can help local actors make better decisions, but knowledge transfer activities can too easily take on a patronizing tone. Interveners can avoid that tone by providing expertise and exposing locals to new approaches with empowerment in mind.

Learn by Doing

Several case studies focused on the concept of learning by doing rather than through didactic approaches. Not only is this a better way for adults to absorb material, it also brings participants into contact with the stakeholders and issues they must work with in the real world. As Howard Wolpe describes his work with the BLTP, “This requires more than ‘book learning’ and a cognitive understanding of concepts. A paradigm or mind-shift cannot be taught; it must be experienced. The same is true of trusting relationships that develop only over time and involve personal emotional investment. Likewise, an appreciation of the importance of process will emerge only through direct experience with others.”¹ The process of engaging adversaries in the Niger Delta and Guatemala, and of engaging government agencies in Iraq, modeled—in a relatively controlled, low-impact way—the same relationships and problems the participants would face in the real world.

*“People must have a chance to learn for themselves
and to see consequences play out”*

In many cases, interveners may have a prescribed way of doing something that they want participants to follow. Learning by doing challenges interveners to refrain from providing guidance outright and instead to encourage participants to develop best practices for themselves. For example, CBI knew that an evaluation should follow principles of participatory, transparency, and inclusiveness. But by making space for the participants to draw those conclusions themselves through dialogue and exploration of goals, CBI enabled participants to feel greater ownership of the specific concepts and greater control of the process.

Work with the Agendas of Local Actors

Local actors must be involved from the outset in shaping programming as well as in their own capacity building. This involvement not only ensures their active participation in the project, but results in more effective, relevant project design because the design has incorporated local knowledge. The co-analysis technique is intended to result in a jointly designed strategy for capacity building that builds on existing skills. It involves periods of learning what the other wants to do through a focus on questioning and listening. Beyond simply understanding the interests and objectives of local partners, the co-analysis method is intended to foster an environment where local actors can draw out the expertise and support they want from interveners, rather than interveners imposing good ideas on the local actors.

Short of a formal co-analysis technique, simple sensitivity and awareness of local interests can help interveners recognize and take advantage of engagement opportunities. In Bougainville, the unarmed intervention force had a mindset of looking for opportunities to engage rather than directing engagement. The interveners embraced the unconventional approach of relating through music when they saw how music resonated with the population. If interveners focus on what local actors are interested in as opposed to what their own interests are, the intervention will be more compelling and more sustainable.

One way to test whether an intervention is tapping into local interests is to establish matching requirements, where local actors are required to contribute a certain percentage of the funds, time, labor, or other assets for a project. CEED used a fee-based service to ensure the strength of the commitment of both the participants and interveners, whereas ICAP used a community cost-share approach.

One approach that merges locally driven agendas with learning by doing is to conduct a participatory assessment. In the same way that CBI used a participatory evaluation of an existing initiative, interveners can involve stakeholders in the assessment phase

before the launch of a project. In both Iraq and Guatemala, the projects used a variation of the PAR approach; the Burundi case and the co-analysis feature box showcase the importance of defining the agenda with stakeholders from the start. An expanded version of a participatory assessment can involve stakeholders as a way to raise their awareness of the issues and other actors and to lay a foundation for continued development of relationships.

Build on Local Strengths

Interventions do not start from a blank slate, and practitioners must convey that fact clearly to their local partners. It is advisable to avoid needs-based assessments that encourage local actors to focus on what they do not have and that raise expectations of having all those (limitless) desires met. Strengths-based assessment—also known as “appreciative inquiry”—focuses local actors on what they bring to the table. Not only does this create a sense of pride and self-reliance, but the fact that projects are tied to existing infrastructures and skills is more sustainable than creating entirely new systems from scratch. The ICAP resource mapping and CBI’s interview design both integrated a focus on local strengths and “what is going right.” As CBI noted, this approach carries the risk of being rejected if serious problems exist in the region and the perception that the intervener is trying to cover them up. But facilitators can explain that the approach is part of the overall goal of discovering opportunities for action and improvement, rather than avoiding identification of problems.

Employ Sequencing

In Guatemala, the project organized events strategically to ensure that participants were exposed to outside expertise at the moment when they could best absorb it, which allowed them to engage in more substantive dialogue instead of just listening passively.

Take Advantage of Peer Learning. When local actors learn from each other rather than from outsiders, the dynamic is significantly different. Peers from the same conflict may be more willing to criticize the practicalities of ideas for their context, or may provide more specific feedback than outsiders, but only if the intervention environment is conducive to such exchanges. Presentations by locals to each other can offer a subtle way to provide indirect feedback, as groups judge each other’s performance and strive to excel or address weaknesses they see in the presentations even if they do not explicitly critique each other. The Institute’s method in Afghanistan depended heavily on peer-directed teaching, and ICAP frequently brings together more advanced CAGs with newly mobilized CAGs for peer learning.

*“Strengths-based assessment . . . focuses local actors
on what they bring to the table”*

Let Mentors Share Their Experience

As the CEED example illustrates, people in conflict zones are intensely aware of the challenges they face and may treat as suspect or irrelevant methodologies—or trainers—imported from nonconflict contexts. When possible, interveners should use presenters and staff from the same conflict or with a background in another conflict to provide credibility and foster a sense of shared experience. In addition, the insights and networking opportunities that such people present are likely to be more relevant to the local actors.

Build Capacity through Adversarial Interactions. Local actors can learn from interacting with adversaries as well as from peers. Where this methodology has been used, it seems to have been used unconsciously. Intervenors do not always recognize that their own interactions with local organizations can be a capacity-building opportunity in itself, and therefore they do not take advantage of it. Intervenors that actively examine each interaction with local actors may be able to refine their interactions ways that build capacity. For example, press conferences with local journalists can become an opportunity for intervenors to explain the intervention and a training ground for local journalists to practice investigative skills. Monitoring and complaint systems for the behavior of foreign forces can raise awareness of standards for government behavior and transparency and for citizen involvement and activism.

Address the Constraints of the Local Context

Utilize Local Systems

Where appropriate, intervenors should consider how to integrate the intervention with existing local institutions and structures rather than creating new systems. However, in some cases, structures do not exist or the existing structures are part of the problem because they are corrupt or exclusionary of key groups. In such cases, intervenors may choose to offer new systems to engage relevant stakeholders. In Iraq, while working closely with government structures and local leaders, ICAP created a new forum for interaction and facilitated the inclusion of traditionally marginalized groups and the emergence of new community leaders.

How should intervenors balance these imperatives? An intervention will often be most successful when it involves making incremental adjustments within existing systems, such as improving the access of marginalized groups to existing resources and decision-making processes. Where possible, an intervention should avoid trying to combat or act parallel to existing processes. Ideally, the new systems will link to existing systems

and bring pressure to bear for their reform rather than setting up something entirely new. In Guatemala, the new forum channeled recommendations into the existing political process. ICAP envisions the gradual transition of community development to government budgets, though with substantial community input—this transition, however, is an ongoing challenge for the program to achieve and depends on progress outside the control of ICAP. Similarly, the Niger Delta project placed emphasis on influencing the decisions of local government but had little ability to pressure local government to be more effective.

In terms of aligning an intervention’s own organizational arrangements with those of local systems, interveners should take care to make these compatible with the local division of authority and boundaries. Otherwise jurisdictions and authority may be divided between multiple actors.

Provide Political Cover for Participation

In many cases, participation in conflict management and reconciliation programming—or even just interacting with members from other communities—is a dangerous endeavor for local actors. Moreover, activities associated with such programming (e.g., decisions on participation, resource allocation) may place local actors “out in front” of their communities in terms of acceptable levels of intercommunal collaboration. To mitigate these risks, interveners can provide cover for participants, either to reduce their own reservations about participating, as in Guatemala, or to enable participants to “sell” their activities to their own constituencies, as in the Niger Delta (by creating a findings document that represented multiple views rather than just points of consensus) and in Iraq (by demonstrating tangible benefits to communities).

A variety of institutional arrangements can facilitate the participation of reluctant actors. Burundi and Guatemala used organizations or individuals perceived as neutral or widely respected for a particular expertise, and reinforced that perception with the involvement of outside actors such as the United Nations and neighboring countries. In some contexts, the involvement of outsiders may be reassuring; in others, participants may need purely local management to feel comfortable exploring issues. In the extreme case, anonymity can provide cover for participation or viewpoints, such as with some of the Niger Delta interviews. The nature of the activity can also provide cover; with the Burundi project and in Guatemala, the formulation as a leadership capacity-building initiative or research effort depoliticized the projects.

“An intervention will often be most successful when it involves making incremental adjustments within existing systems”

Choose Appropriate Representatives

In choosing interlocutors for particular audiences, there is a constant tension between equality and inclusiveness while engaging people who have reliable access to and credibility with that group. Although the strategies presented here do not fully resolve that tension, they suggest that the stage of the process and the role of the interlocutor may affect this trade-off. The intervening organizations ensured that initial interactions were handled by the people who would make participants feel most comfortable (as in the Niger Delta interviews and the Guatemala effort to recruit participation) or whose legitimacy was crucial (ICAP invitations sent by Iraqi mayors). As participants established relationships and processes for interaction, more flexibility in the choice of interlocutors was possible, as in Burundi, where the local managers took more active roles after trust had been developed. The ICAP was able to use unconventional interlocutors as mobilizers (women, young people) because these people were perceived as representatives of the organization for a specific purpose rather than as leaders of the process.

Manage Expectations

Practitioners are familiar with the risk of expectations that are not in line with reality, and often talk about managing expectations so that local actors do not become disappointed with or disillusioned by the progress of peace operations. The case studies suggest that interveners should not manage expectations but rather should involve local actors so they can see for themselves what is realistic to expect from a program and then set their own expectations accordingly. For example, participants were part of every step of the ICAP process, understanding the trade-offs and prioritization involved. In the development of the IRN, members made decisions on what they were willing to contribute to achieve corresponding benefits. In the Niger Delta and Guatemala, participants from various interest groups were responsible for identifying shortages and constraints together.

Use Meaningful Impact and Evaluation Methods

Impact Multipliers

Most practitioners are familiar with the advantage of a train-the-trainer approach that creates capacity for local actors to replicate a training project on their own, expanding the reach of the initial interaction. The USIP case study puts an additional twist on this approach by encouraging initial participants to refine the material presented in the training for their own context—making it more likely that important substance will be passed on rather than launching a game of “telephone” in which content is lost in each

iteration. There are other ways to expand the reach of a project beyond the immediate participants—such as the radio show that incorporated reconciliation programming and the recording produced in Bougainville. Whatever the mechanism used, interveners should try to incorporate some kind of impact multiplier into interventions to achieve the maximum impact for the investment.

Monitoring

Monitoring should not be discarded as overly paternalistic, but instead should be handled in ways that strengthen the accountability of the local actors to their own communities or constituents rather than to the intervener. For example, a local NGO might be required to brief its community on its progress rather than submitting a report to a foreign donor. In the ICAP, volunteer CAG members (including ordinary citizens, business leaders, and government leaders) were trained to monitor community progress in collaboration with ACIDI/VOCA trained staff (the results, however, were submitted to USAID through ACIDI/VOCA rather than directly to communities which missed an opportunity for local control). In Sierra Leone, violations of the code of conduct were brought to network members for action, not to donors.

Measures of Effectiveness

How institutions judge progress and effectiveness will require systemic change if metrics are to support effective engagement strategies. New measures of effectiveness are needed to evaluate programs that take place over long time frames that focus on process, relationships, and capacity development rather than on tangible outputs. Intervenors need to measure the quality of the systems and skills they have fostered, as well as the quality of their own interaction with local actors.

Show Respect and Humility

It would seem unnecessary to make this point, but even the best intentioned practitioners may not be aware of how their actions are perceived in terms of setting a tone of respect for local partners.

Jargon

The terminology used in the project can reinforce or undermine a sense of mutual respect. In the cases studies, interveners preferred phrases such as “knowledge transfer or exchange.” They avoided phrases commonly used in interventions that convey a lack of respect for local knowledge and expertise, such as “taking off the training wheels”

“The terminology used in a project can reinforce or undermine a sense of mutual respect”

and “it is better for them to do it poorly than for us to do it perfectly.” These kinds of phrases present a false (and rather patronizing) choice between local and intervener capacity. References to parent-child or teacher-student relationships, although not intended malevolently, may invoke resentment among locals who want to be treated as equals.

Interveners should design project terminology (including names and acronyms) around the local language and context rather than using labels that resonate in their own.

Mutual Learning

Interventions should emphasize that the interveners are there to learn from local actors. Instead of framing the relationship as a superior training an inferior, interveners should cast it as an exchange of knowledge based on the strengths of each. The Institute emphasized that the techniques it was teaching might not be appropriate in the Afghan context and urged participants to highlight any shortcomings found and explain the changes made so that Institute staff could learn more about what would work there.

Use Local Staff in Leadership Positions

As the case studies demonstrate, the use of local staff and facilitators reinforces the impression that the intervener believes in the capacity of local actors to manage the project. If training requires outsiders, interveners should use people who have had similar experiences in another context. This creates a sense that the interveners are there to create an environment in which learning can take place, facilitating exposure to outside ideas that might be useful, rather than taking the role of teachers or owners of the knowledge.

Let Locals Take Credit

Most interveners are well aware that accomplishments should bring recognition for the local actor, not the outsider; in the cases presented, local stakeholders were in the forefront of any victory celebrations. But ensuring that locals take the credit can be more subtle (and a greater sacrifice) than giving up a banner or center stage at a ribbon-cutting ceremony. For example, interveners may offer “fringe benefits” of participation in international conferences or special events to their preferred local partners, creating some level of obligation in return. Interveners could instead arrange for those benefits to be granted through local associations or local leaders so that the credit (and obligation) accrues to local actors instead of to the foreigner. For example, instead of choosing a local partner to attend an international conference on human rights, the intervener could delegate the selection to the coordinators of the process itself, with

the understanding that the attendee would then report back to that group. That way, individuals see the value, as well as the responsibility, of being an active part of the relationship, rather than seeking favors directly from the intervener.

Interveners should also avoid “taking the voice” from their local partners in explaining an achievement to the community or to the world and instead assist them in conducting their own publicity.

Don't Make Yourself Part of the Solution

Perhaps the hardest concept for interveners to internalize, and the most important factor in designing an intervention is this: *never make yourself part of the solution*. As long as the new process or relationship requires a direct, continuing role for the intervener, the process is not a viable, sustainable local solution.

Note

1. Howard Wolpe with Steve McDonald, Eugene Nindorera, Elizabeth McClintock, Alain Lempereur, Fabien Nsengimana, Nicole Rumeau, and Alli Blair, “Rebuilding Peace and State Capacity in War-Torn Burundi,” *The Round Table* 93, no. 375 (July 2004).

The Participatory Strategic Planning Index®

Gary Bland

In its capacity-building work with local governments, RTI International promoted “participatory budgeting”—processes for municipalities to directly involve their constituents in decision making on public planning and investment. In an effort to determine how successful a local government participatory planning process is, RTI created a system to measure the results of its support for participatory practice in post-conflict El Salvador in 2000, called the Participatory Strategic Planning (PSP) index. RTI now uses the PSP index to assess and evaluate progress for local governments in the developing world.

The PSP index considers six criteria for the capacity of a participatory planning and budgeting process and weighs progress in each: (1) institutionalization of the participatory process; (2) social and gender equity; (3) citizen co-responsibility; (4) transparency in management and execution; (5) complementarity, or support from local, national, and international actors; and (6) accountability and sustainability. A series of indicators serves as measures of progress, and progress along each indicator determines the assignment of points up to pre-established maximum for that indicator. The sum total of points for all indicators across all components—the maximum score is 100—provides a single measure of the strength of the participatory process. Some components, such as degree of institutionalization, carry greater numerical weight than others.

For example, the citizen co-responsibility component of the PSP index measures the involvement of nongovernmental actors and is based on the concept that citizens should be engaged with municipal authorities at all stages of the participatory process—planning, financing, execution, and maintenance of specific projects. Citizens are viewed not only as participants but as agents for public monitoring and oversight. Two indicators are used to measure citizens’ roles: (1) the amount of support (labor, funding, equipment, etc.) voluntarily provided by the community as a percentage of the total amount of project investments; and (2) the percentage share of municipal investment executed with the participation of a local management committee that includes community representatives.

Although the index was originally developed to measure the level of participation in a local government’s planning process, the measures and indicators may help outside implementers evaluate their own engagement strategies as well.

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The United States Institute of Peace is an independent, nonpartisan institution, created and funded by Congress to prevent and resolve violent international conflicts. USIP's mission is to increase the United States' capacity to manage international conflict—to think, act, teach and train—and to devise practical approaches to peacebuilding.

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