

Conflict Transformation Papers

Volume 11

**Sharing Northern Ireland's Experience of Peacemaking and
Peacebuilding Internationally**

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Conflict Transformation Papers

“Building Peace through Partnership” is a conflict transformation programme being developed by LINC Resource Centre in partnership with a number of community-based initiatives that are committed to constructive dialogue between individuals and groups as a means of facilitating conflict transformation at grass roots level. It is our intention to publish a series of papers on issues raised at community level which project participants believe are relevant to the conflict transformation process. The views expressed in the articles published in this series of Conflict Transformation Papers are those of the various authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Management and Staff of LINC or its associate groups.

Billy Mitchell

Series Editor

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SHARING NORTHERN IRELAND'S EXPERIENCE OF PEACEMAKING AND PEACEBUILDING INTERNATIONALLY

Over the course of 'the Troubles' and the peace process, Northern Ireland has grabbed headlines and emptied donor pockets – often disproportionately to the size of the conflict itself. International interest in Northern Ireland has also spawned numerous junkets to various parts of the world. There remains however, a strong case for *greater* sharing between Northern Ireland and other countries, conflicts and contexts. This paper begins by outlining some the reasons why we should continue to engage in this type of work, before turning to examine its impact in practice. It also provides a case study of the Belfast-Jerusalem Civil Society Partnership – established in 2004 to research, develop, share and disseminate skills and practices to help build communities, strengthen civil society and transform conflict in Jerusalem and Belfast.

The Local and the Global

Globalisation means the world is becoming an increasingly interconnected place. Today, local conflicts can have powerful national, regional and global consequences. Hence, for example, key Western European powers like Germany, the UK and the Netherlands intervened in Kosovo because the conflict presented the threat of large-scale movements of refugees escaping violence and other human rights violations in the province. More recently, conflict-ravaged countries like Sudan and Somalia have attracted new international attention due to their potential for harbouring terrorists.

Global factors also seemingly drive local, national or regional conflicts. During the Cold War, for example, many regional conflicts were fuelled and sustained by the military, financial and political support of the United States or the Soviet Union and their respective allies, depending on which side of the ideological fence they sat. Moreover, the war on terrorism which began in the wake of September 11th 2001, has both dampened and escalated local conflicts. For example, it has encouraged the government of Pakistan to exert greater control over militant Islamic groups that have conducted terrorist acts against India in the past and thereby helped avert escalation of the Pakistan-India conflict. The war on terrorism has also however, encouraged the Israeli government to believe it could act forcefully without external constraints against Palestinian groups that have committed terrorist acts.

“The forces of globalization have had a direct impact on how conflicts are dealt with. For example, third parties in conflict resolution have attempted to transform highly conflictual and violent societies into peaceful ones by imposing democratic elections and establishing a market based economy...yet in some cases these reforms have led to a further destabilisation of the domestic environment.”

Yeomans, C., 2002, *Protracted Structural Conflict Transformation in the Americas*, [online] Quebec: Inter-American Studies Center. Available from: <http://www.cei.ulaval.ca/Pdf/Introduction.pdf> [Accessed 17 September 2005]

Genuinely transforming conflict in Northern Ireland therefore obliges us to look beyond our immediate situation to the deeper patterns and underlying causes of conflict. This, in turn, means paying attention to our connections to the rest of the world.

European Union Commitment

International connections to Northern Ireland have also brought significant financial gain to the region. For example, the European Union's (EU) Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the six Border Counties of Ireland emerged in 1994 to reinforce progress towards a peaceful and stable society and to promote reconciliation. The first PEACE programme was allocated a total of €531 million and funded over 13,000 projects. Building on this, Peace II has contributed an additional €707 million to Northern Ireland (including UK and Irish government contributions) with more than 5,300 projects supported. A two-year extension and further €144 million has recently been added to the PEACE II Programme, with the possibility that this will rise to €160 million.

“PEACE II has provided an impetus to address the under investment in the social, physical and economic infrastructure of each of the areas that has been as a direct consequence of the conflict. Second, through the introduction of the distinctiveness criteria, an environment has been created where applicants have had to think about other communities and the needs that exist there. This has made a lot of recipient organisations of PEACE II recognise the impact of the conflict and how that may be addressed in as inclusive a manner as possible... research has shown us that PEACE II has contributed to putting in place an environment where individuals and organisations have to consider the needs of others. Whether or not this has fully translated into addressing divisions and engendering greater inclusivity within our society is debatable. Nevertheless given the enormity of the task in hand it would be churlish not to recognise the significance of PEACE II in attempting to create the conditions through which a normal and stable society may be achieved. The PEACE II funding programme is a chapter in a much larger and complex story that has yet to reach its conclusion.”

SEUPB, 2004, *Telling the Story of Peace II*, [online] Belfast: NICVA.
Available from:
<http://www.communityni.org/index.cfm/section/Publications/key/05072005seupb> [Accessed 17 September 2005].

Between 1989 and 1993, Northern Ireland was awarded this EU funding on the basis that it was an Objective 1 region lagging behind in development, that is, whose per capita GDP was less than 75 per cent of the EU average at the time. This meant the EU contributed as much as 75 per cent of the eligible cost of projects with the rest being matched by the British and Irish governments. Since 1993 however, Northern Ireland's GDP per head has risen above the threshold for Objective 1 status. Yet the EU continues to fund up to 75 per cent of project costs in Northern Ireland having generously awarded it 'Objective 1 transition status.' This unique and unprecedented EU commitment places an onus on Northern Ireland to share the good practice and learning it has developed from the Peace programme to date – particularly with other conflict-affected areas in Europe such as the Balkans.

Northern Ireland Learning from South Africa

The case for greater sharing between Northern Ireland and other countries and conflicts is further strengthened by Northern Ireland having itself benefited from learning about a variety of other peace processes. In particular, there have been a significant number of international exchanges between Northern Irish and South African politicians, policymakers, researchers and non-governmental (NGO) staff.ⁱ In 1994 and 1995, two separate groups of politicians from Northern Ireland visited South Africa to learn about its experience of peacemaking and peacebuilding. Following his participation in one of these visits, John Alderdice, a past leader of the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland, noted that, "the lessons (learnt) have influenced my party to publish proposals for changes in police accountability in Northern Ireland."ⁱⁱ Sinn Fein's Tom Hartley, felt his visit to South Africa showed him the value of, "imaginative ways of co-operation, compromise and the significance of personal contact and trust."ⁱⁱⁱ In 1997, leading politicians from both the National Party and the ANC again invited Northern Ireland's politicians to South Africa so that "they could benefit from their experience in reaching accommodation."^{iv}

More recently, Paul Murphy visited South Africa in 2004 - officially on a fact-finding mission to glean tips from those involved in South Africa's truth and reconciliation commission - but also in an effort to sway sceptics at home in Northern Ireland about the need to advance the process of reconciliation. Senior police officers from Northern Ireland have also drawn important lessons from observation and discussion with their counterparts in South Africa – particularly regarding the concept and practice of community policing. Other exchanges between South Africa and Northern Ireland have included a focus on the criminal justice system, punishment beatings, restorative justice and victim-support work.

"In a positive sense, South Africa now serves as a conceptual benchmark for others. Key players in that country are often assertive and realistic in their understanding of the frameworks they were operating in and the factors they were subject to."

Brocklehurst, H., Stott, N., Robinson, G., and Hamber, B., 2001, *Lesson Drawing from Negotiated Transitions in Northern Ireland and South Africa*, [online]. INCORE. Available from: <http://www.incore.ulster.ac.uk/publications/pdf/APSAMHamberBran.pdf> [Accessed 17 September 2005].

Reflecting on these various connections between Northern Ireland and South Africa, it is clear that their significance lies less in the direct import of policies and practices, than in:

- Making unofficial and informal interaction between adversary groups possible;
- Enabling policymakers to discuss sensitive issues far removed from their own environments; and in
- Reassuring and building confidence during periods of transition.

Whilst the peace process is far from complete, Northern Ireland is at a stage where it, in turn, can and should provide this space for others. Indeed, there are plenty of examples of Northern Ireland beginning to do so – demonstrated recently when a group of city councillors from Basra, Iraq visited Northern Ireland in April 2004 to learn about local government in a conflict situation.

It is also perhaps in recognition of this, that the EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Border Region of Ireland has developed Measure 4.1, Outward and Forward Looking Region, to “contribute to making Northern Ireland and the Border Region a more outward and forward looking region by developing networks of co-operation on a cross-sectoral basis and encouraging a structured approach to participation in wider European and international networks.”^v

Belfast-Jerusalem Civil Society Partnership

During 2003/04, INCORE (International Conflict Research), University of Ulster and Intercomm – an intercommunity organisation based in North Belfast – began working together on a range of initiatives regarding interface areas in Northern Ireland. A strong partnership built on the “trust and shared values critical to successful working involving partners based in widely differing institutional settings” quickly developed between the two organisations.^{vi} Given each other’s long history of engagement with conflict-affected countries such as South Africa, Sri Lanka, El Salvador, Nepal and Croatia, INCORE and Intercomm soon began to consider whether they could work together on an international level.

The two organisations subsequently made a number of exploratory visits to Israel/Palestine during 2004 – jointly participating in a PASSIA (Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs) seminar in Ramallah

entitled “Ireland and Palestine – Divided Countries United By History,” and also meeting with various academics, policy makers and practitioners. Through these exploratory visits INCORE and Intercomm established particularly close relationships with PANORAMA – a Palestinian Center for the Dissemination of Democracy & Community Development – and Ir-Amim (“City of Nations” or “City of People”) founded to engage in those issues impacting on Israeli-Palestinian relations in Jerusalem, and on the political future of the city.

During informal discussions between all of these organisations about the status of peace processes in their respective situations, INCORE, Intercomm, PANORAMA and Ir-Amim were all particularly struck by the similarities between Belfast and Jerusalem as ‘unresolved’ cities whose future may be subject to political deadlocks, vacuums and settlements, and as cities in which it is especially important to enhance the capacity of civil society to contribute to peace.

Mission, Goals and Objectives

Following a reciprocal study visit by Israelis and Palestinians to Northern Ireland in December 2004, INCORE, Intercomm, PANORAMA and Ir-Amim established the Belfast-Jerusalem Civil Society Partnership (B-JCSP). The Partnership’s mission was agreed to be: ‘to research, develop, share and disseminate skills and practices to help build communities, strengthen civil society and transform conflict in Jerusalem and Northern Ireland.’

Belfast-Jerusalem Civil Society Partnership Member Organisations

- **INCORE** is an action-oriented international centre of excellence for peace and conflict research at the University of Ulster and is affiliated to the United Nations University.
- **Intercomm** is an inter-community organisation based in North Belfast specialising in economic regeneration, social reconstruction and local and international peace-building practices
- **Ir Amim** (“City of Nations” or “City of Peoples”) is an NGO founded to engage on those issues impacting on Israeli-Palestinian relations in Jerusalem, and on the political future of the city
- **Panorama** is an NGO dedicated to the development of Palestinian society and to promoting the notions of civil society among Palestinians.

Recognising that each member organisation has different responsibilities and resources the B-JCSP agreed from the outset that all of its programmes and activities should:

1. Involve academic and practice-oriented research, and link research to action.

2. Serve all member organisations' interest in building communities, strengthening civil society and transforming conflict in Northern Ireland and Jerusalem.
3. Be feasible within constraints on resources.

To achieve its mission, the Partnership then set the following objectives:

- To facilitate dialogue and debate regarding community building, civil society and conflict transformation in Jerusalem and Northern Ireland through a series of workshops, conferences, seminars and study visits.
- To conduct comparative academic and practice-oriented research in the above areas.
- To develop and sustain relationships between policymakers, practitioners and academics involved in community, civil society and conflict transformation work in Jerusalem and Northern Ireland.
- To promote evidence-based and 'best practice' approaches to community-building, strengthening civil society and conflict transformation in Northern Ireland and Jerusalem.

Review

In order to avoid duplication and to build on prior experience, the Belfast-Jerusalem Civil Society Partnership (B-JCSP) began its work by conducting a brief review of international comparative work between Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine. The full findings of this review can be found on INCORE's web site: <http://www.incore.ulst.ac.uk>. In brief however, the review found that most of the heavyweight academic work looks at similarities and differences between Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine, compares the two situations as examples of settler/native conflicts, post-colonial societies, partition, conflicts between subordinate and dominant groups, and as examples of struggles for self-determination. For example, Tom Fraser has examined how partition was seen as a means of resolving conflict, but ultimately proved to be unsuccessful, in the cases of Ireland, India and Palestine^{vii}. In *the Elusive Search for Peace*, Hermann and Jannie focus on why conflicts in Northern Ireland, South Africa and Israel have proved so intractable^{viii}.

In addition to this largely historical work, analysts like Meron Benvenisti and Menachem Klein have compared contemporary challenges such as powersharing, building peace constituencies and marginalising radicals in both Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine. Gidron, Katz and Hasenfeld have also conducted an interesting international study of peace and conflict resolution organisations in South Africa, Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine.^{ix} Even more recently, Eetta Prince's award-winning journalism has focused on the role played by civic leaders and civil society organisations in contributing to peace.

Study visits and exchanges between Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine have also become particularly popular – most often targeting women and youth as participants. For example, in September 2003, a 22-strong group of young Israelis and Palestinians – brought together by the Young Israeli Forum for Cooperation and the Vision Group – came to Ireland for a five-day programme of study/training workshops and cross-cultural seminars. Some of the encounters and explorations that took place during this visit are recounted in FARSET Community Think Tanks Project, Island Pamphlets 58: *Making Road Maps to Peace* and 57: *Reflections on Violence*.

B-JCSP Key Issues

Based on the B-JCSP's review of previous international comparative work between Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine, the Partnership decided to focus its activities on the following key issues:

- Community Development
- Single-Identity/Uni-National Work
- Interfaces
- Social Economy And Community Enterprise
- Promotion Of Non-Violent Strategies
- Identity, Citizenship And Nationality
- Justice And Human Rights
- Developing Shared Visions Of Cities

Belfast-Jerusalem Civil Society Partnership (B-JCSP) Conference

Following its review, the Partnership agreed to organise a conference, 20th-22nd April 2005, in Jerusalem to discuss community development, identity and education – issues which have yet to be explored in the Northern Ireland/Israel/Palestine comparative context. The conference gathered together more than 50 representatives from NGOs, academia, government and the media from across Israel, Palestine and Northern Ireland. The objectives of the conference were to:

1. Establish and sustain working relationships between academics, policymakers and practitioners in Jerusalem and Northern Ireland.
2. Produce new academic and practice-oriented research in relation to the themes of the conference.
3. To share knowledge and experience of community development, identity and education policy and practice in both Belfast and Jerusalem.

The discussions that took place during this conference are outlined below together with analysis of the broad themes emerging from them.

Session One: Community Development & Empowerment
20th April 2005, 09:30-13:30

Participants

Yasser Abu Khater, *Al Quds University*
Samit Al-Jundi, *Seeds of Peace*
John Bell, *University of Toronto*
Nora Carmi, *Sabeel Center*
Sammy Douglas, *East Belfast Partnership*
Hassan Dowani, *UN*
Barbara Epstein, *Community Advocacy*
Grace Fraser, *Conflict Researcher*
Tom Fraser, *University of Ulster*
Amos Gil, *Ir Amim*
Ronit Hedy, *SHATIL*
Joanne Hughes, *University of Ulster*
Saman Khoury, *Peace & Democracy Forum*
Sarah Kreimer, *Ir Amim*
Hana Lasman, *JPG*
Helen Lewis, *INCORE*
Liam Maskey, *Intercomm*
Rab McCallum, *North Belfast Interface Network*
Frank Murphy, *Belfast Local Strategy Partnership*
Eetta Prince-Gibson, *Ir Amim*
Benjamin Pogrund, *Yaker Center*
Walid Salem, *PANORAMA*
Adeeb Salim, *Willy Brandt Center*
Danny Savitch, *Jerusalem Open House*
James Sevitt, *Ir Amim*
Fadel Tahboub, *Peace & Democracy Forum*

- 1.1 Eetta Prince-Gibson, Ir Amim, opened the discussion by asking participants how we define the term ‘community’ and what we mean by it. She invited participants to describe the challenges they face in relation to the development of their respective communities in Belfast and Jerusalem. Can communities be developed despite the lack of political resolution in both of these cities? Eetta also asked the group to consider the opportunities and constraints of single-identity/uni-national and cross/inter-community work.
- 1.2 Barbara Epstein, Director of the social rights organisation Community Advocacy, described the various rights-based strategies they employ to address disempowerment at four different levels – the personal level, bureaucratic level, community level and legal level. Actions taken by Community Advocacy to address disempowerment at these different levels have included: accessing individuals directly through home visits, establishing a storefront advocacy centre, providing support for

community organising around communal problems and engaging in community economic development.

- 1.3 Liam Maskey described the development of Intercomm as an inter-community organisation based in North Belfast specialising in economic regeneration, social reconstruction and local and international peace-building practices. Liam noted that North Belfast has experienced some of the worst of the social, economic and political problems arising out of political violence in Northern Ireland – including over 25% of deaths relating to the conflict. North Belfast is therefore something like the Gaza of Palestine or the Kwa-Zulu Natal of South Africa. To facilitate social and economic development within North Belfast, Intercomm sponsors and supports various projects addressing issues such as long-term unemployment, housing, micro-enterprise and interfaces (for further details please visit: <http://www.intercommbelfast.com>). Liam suggested that community development work is about developing leadership. He noted however, that this does not necessarily mean creating new leaders, but rather identifying existing leaders and providing them with the recognition and support they need.

A key challenge for those engaged in community development work on the ground in Northern Ireland is to document and share practice. Through better documentation and sharing of practice, community workers can learn to avoid each other's mistakes, be more strategic and adopt evidence-based approaches. It is also important for community-based projects to become sustainable as quickly as possible. Indeed, Northern Ireland's community and voluntary sector is likely to face a major crisis in the near future due to reduction in European funds.

It is difficult to reconcile the constraints of short-term funding with the long-term project of conflict resolution/conflict transformation/peacebuilding. Liam closed with John Paul Lederach's assertion that it takes a lot more time to get out of conflict than to get into it.

- 1.4 Walid Salem, Panorama, suggested that 'community' can be defined in two different ways – geographically or functionally. He described three different visions of Jerusalem, 1) a Jerusalem in which one side totally dominates the other, 2) a Jerusalem with one municipality that recognises the facts on the ground – that is, the divided nature of the city, involving separate community development etc., and 3) an open and united city involving community co-operation with two states. These contradictory visions can be a challenge to community development, as can the absence of political leadership, the weakness of civil society, the weakness of social/public movements, Israeli sector obstacles and the 'sovereignty problem.'

- 1.5 Helen Lewis, INCORE, University of Ulster, described some recent findings from a ‘Tools for Community Development’ workshop held in Derry/Londonderry (for further details see: <http://www.incore.ulst.ac.uk/policy/lilp/peace.html>). She suggested that a community can be defined as ‘a group of people with a common characteristic living together within a larger society.’ As such, there can be at least three different types of communities - communities of place, communities of identity and communities of interest. Leading on from this community development is a range of practices dedicated to increasing the strength and effectiveness of community life, improving conditions - especially for people in disadvantaged situations - and enabling people to participate in public decision-making as well as achieve greater long-term control over their circumstances.

Community development can also be thought of as being based on certain principles. In particular, community development is about: a collective focus rather than a response to individual crisis; enabling people to work together to influence, change and exert control over the issues that affect their lives; challenging inequitable power relationships within society and promoting the redistribution of wealth and resources in a more just and equitable fashion; participative processes and structures, which include and empower marginalised and excluded groups within society; solidarity with the interests of those experiencing social exclusion; alternative ways of working – being flexible, dynamic, innovative and creative in approach; challenging the nature of the relationship between the users and providers of services; being a wholly positive endeavour which challenges the prejudice and discrimination faced by its community without being discriminatory to any other community.

- 1.6 Liam Maskey emphasised the importance of identifying and recognising who communities are before engaging in community development work.
- 1.7 Sarah Kreimer described how Ir Amim aims to develop a strong civil society in East Jerusalem with the view that this is something that will be good for Israel in the long-term. Ir Amim currently works in four different neighbourhoods in East Jerusalem. The organisation is very much driven by local needs on the ground and therefore plays largely a facilitative or supporting role in helping communities work on the issues that they choose to, for example, the local sewer system. Sarah raised the controversial issue that what is good for a community may not necessarily be good for the national interest.
- 1.8 A member of the group questioned whether an outcome of community development could be to fragment the social network of society, for example, by encouraging people to consider themselves ‘first a Jew,’ ‘first

a Palestinian.’ He noted that the goal of one societal network is particularly important for Jerusalem, in a context where nation state projects are, perhaps, now irrelevant. Community development should therefore be about developing understanding of the partitions between people and the limitations these partitions and divisions impose upon them; in order that people will rise above them and redraw society’s borders.

- 1.9 Eetta Prince-Gibson suggested that two key questions had arisen from the discussion so far, 1) does community development/empowerment necessarily lead to moderation, and 2) is there a hierarchy of communities?
- 1.10 Sammy Douglas, East Belfast Partnership introduced himself as a member of the Protestant community in Northern Ireland. While this community is associated with historical abuses of power, Sammy questioned whether these abuses are therefore necessarily his responsibility. He noted that he would like to hear from other participants about the economic, social and political problems affecting the Jewish community, in particular, poverty, problems with housing and abuses of human rights. At the outset of the conflict, poverty in Northern Ireland was associated exclusively with Catholics. However, there has been a gradual process of recognition of Protestant poverty, unemployment etc. (Barbara Epstein clarified that her earlier remarks had been about working to address Jewish poverty, Jewish disempowerment etc. see 1.2).

Sammy argued that in Northern Ireland, Protestants have traditionally perceived community development to be an activity that involves challenging the state and therefore ‘betraying’ their government. He questioned whether community development in its extreme form could therefore mean planting a bomb? Sammy suggested that paramilitaries could also be considered to be ‘communities of interest.’ Paramilitary groups are generally composed of a small number of people but have major impact as their actions are directed less against individuals than against whole communities. Sammy noted that in the context of a cease fire and a peace process it is critical that paramilitaries move quickly into community development, otherwise they risk moving into organised crime and become ‘bandits.’

- 1.11 The group discussed the importance of peace having delivered economic prosperity in Northern Ireland and the incentive of economic development for bringing about change. One participant in the discussion noted that the disparity between taxes paid by Palestinians and services received is an important potential source of action.

- 1.12 Sammy Douglas stated that it was important for Catholics in Northern Ireland that community development was not only about economics, but also raising political awareness.
- 1.13 Barbara Epstein suggested that at the national level, individuals do not seem to vote according to who would best serve them in relation to the social issues that affect them. She argued that there is a need for more leaders capable of bridging individual problems to connect with people ‘on the other side’ with the same problems.
- 1.14 Rab McCallum, North Belfast Interface Network outlined his Republican background and history in Northern Ireland. He described the change in approach away from ‘who can inflict the most, not endure the most, will win;’ towards achieving the Republican project through political means. Rab argued that community development is about empowerment and therefore planting a bomb cannot qualify as community development in its extreme form. Rather, community development is a vehicle to deliver conflict transformation.
- 1.15 Tom Fraser, University of Ulster suggested that the strength of community development and civil society in Northern Ireland can be attributed to continued existence of a ‘democratic deficit,’ that is, vacuum of political power.
- 1.16 One member of the group described how her work with people centred around shared interests does not necessarily mean ignoring or giving up the differences between them. Instead, her organisation takes a pragmatic approach exploring differences and areas of disagreement *before* focusing on shared interests and what people can achieve together.
- 1.17 Sammy Douglas described how a pot of funding provided the necessary incentive for different community representatives, business persons and politicians to come together in a Belfast Local Strategy Partnership board to distribute money to various community projects and programmes. This example demonstrates the need for there to be something ‘on the table.’
- 1.18 A participant emphasised the importance of participation in achieving successful community development and subsequently the need to reintroduce the idea of participation to Palestinian society in Jerusalem which seems to have been absent since the occupation in 1967. The root causes of such alienation and atomisation need to be addressed.
- 1.19 The group discussed the difficulty in bringing different communities together when there is no parity between them. Liam Maskey, Intercomm suggested a way round this is to take simultaneous but separate approaches to each community, before examining commonalities between

them. He re-emphasised the importance of community development bringing about mutual understanding - after all it's extremely difficult to kill someone who's nice! Vilification of individuals and communities is a learned behaviour. Language and semantics can be a key issue here in building respect. Understanding the 'other' is an important pre-requisite to participation in cross/inter-community work – both to ensure such work 'does no harm' and that individuals are able to participate with a clear conscience and justify participation to their own communities.

- 1.20 Walid Salem, Panorama described a number of joint Israeli-Palestinian activities including solidarity initiatives and cooperation in areas such as education, health, the environment and even politics (for example, in relation to the Geneva Accord). Where cooperation is *absent* however, is in relation to community-based activity. Walid argued that community-based cooperation should look for understanding as opposed to agreement, and focus on developing tolerance as opposed to 'moderation.'
- 1.21 Samit Al-Jundi, Seeds of Peace, outlined the achievements of his organisation in relation to community development in people's normal lives, in conflict (on a uni-national and bi-national basis) and in post-conflict situations.
- 1.22 Frank Murphy, Belfast Local Strategy Partnership, expanded on Sammy's earlier comments describing how his organisation brings together a total of twenty-eight board members, with seven members from statutory organisations, seven local councillors/politicians and fourteen representatives from trade unions, the community and voluntary sector and the private sector. Whilst Frank noted that not every project has delivered what it agreed to, there has been a high success rate and all funded projects sign up to a code of conduct. He noted that Belfast Local Strategy Partnership is now seeking to develop an integrated strategy for the development of Belfast.

Emerging Themes

- Definitions of 'community' vary according to how people belonging to different communities relate to one another. For example, people may relate to each other on the basis of geography, origin, common needs or in relation to what they do together, that is, *how* the community functions. Therefore (among others), we can talk about communities of place, communities of interest, communities of identity and communities of practice.
- Much of the discussion centred on whether community development is necessarily a positive activity. While community development may contribute to social change and justice, it is important to note that

community development *is not* a substitute for addressing the structural forces and systems that may perpetrate exploitation, exclusion and inequality.

An important concern is also whether community development serves to strengthen one community at the expense of another. This concern can be related to two broader debates. First, to the academic debate over the value of ‘bridging social capital’ that involves bonds of connectedness formed across diverse social groups, as opposed to ‘bonding social capital’ that cements only homogenous groups.

Second, this concern relates to the debate about the value of single-identity/uni-national community work. Long experience in Northern Ireland suggests that in order to address fears, suspicions and concerns it may be necessary to first develop single-identity/uni-national projects. However, these projects *must* take place in the context of an approach that recognises and addresses segregation, division and sectarian/discriminatory behaviour as a problem. They must also identify how they will enable communities to work more effectively together in the long-term. The test is therefore not the structure (whether single-identity/uni-national/cross-community/bi-national) of the project itself, but the quality of the outcomes and whether they do in fact promote good relationship-building work.

- Effective community development relies on leaders from all spheres and levels of the community. First, community leaders often have great scope for innovative and exploratory approaches and are able to work across a range of spheres and organisations to elicit broad community action. Second, community leaders are well placed to identify issues of real public concern and facilitate action to ensure these are placed on the public agenda. Third, civil society provides a place for those least able to access leadership opportunities in the private or government arena to develop their skills and abilities. It is therefore important to identify, recognise and support community leadership within civil society.
- Sharing knowledge, experience, lessons learned, good *and* bad practice’ is crucial for effective community development – helping community workers avoid each other’s mistakes, be more strategic and apply evidence-based approaches.

Session Two: Identity, Dialogue and Affinity Groups
21st April, 09:30-11:30

Participants

Yasser Abu Khater - *Al Quds University*
Zvi Beckerman - *Hebrew University*
Nora Carmi - *Sabeel Center*
Sammy Douglas - *East Belfast Partnership*
Grace Fraser - *Conflict Researcher*
Tom Fraser - *University of Ulster*
Amos Gil - *Ir Amim*
Joanne Hughes - *University of Ulster*
Maya Kahanoff - *Truman Institute, Hebrew University*
Kevin LaFleur - *Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group*
Helen Lewis - *INCORE*
Liam Maskey - *Intercomm*
Rab McCallum - *North Belfast Interface Network*
Frank Murphy - *Belfast Local Strategy Partnership*
Rami Nasrallah - *International Peace & Cooperation Center*
Benjamin Pogrud - *Yakar Center*
Eetta Prince-Gibson - *Ir Amim*
Sara Reeske
Bernard Sabella - *Bethlehem University*
Walid Salem - *PANORAMA*
Fedel Tahboub - *Peace & Democracy Forum*
Emelyne Vernet - *Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group*

- 2.1 Eetta Prince-Gibson, Ir Amim, introduced the session by asking whether it is possible or feasible to support supra-identities, for example being ‘Jerusalemite’ or ‘pro-peace’ in order to support peaceful interactions between communities. She invited the group to discuss the relationship between identity, loyalty and hostility, as well as the value of ‘contact groups’ and single-identity/uni-national work.
- 2.2 Bernard Sabella, Bethlehem University, discussed how experiences of history have had a strong input into identities whether as Palestinians or as members of particular groups. He suggested we live out historical events as part of our collective identities. We therefore need to use the lessons of history to make for a different future in which our differences turn into perspectives that respect others and their experiences and history. It is important to consider how each culture, religion and people can contribute to this different future. This is difficult at a time when Palestinians are facing challenges that accompany the establishment of their state and the arduous process of institution building, and when deep transformations are taking place in relationships with Israelis. The religious parameters that are used to strengthen the sense of identification are also a reminder of the

potential for separateness and divisiveness, not simply along religious lines but also along national and political lines.

- 2.3 The group was asked whether identities could ever be imposed. Liam Maskey, Intercomm responded that people create their own identity – it is therefore both personal and communal. Furthermore, it is more than political, that is, it is not just about whether people will be run by Ireland or England. It is also clear that people ‘know’ their identity because they know who constitutes ‘them and us.’

Liam described how John Major’s ‘Downing Street Declaration’ stating the British government have no ‘selfish strategic or economic interest’ in Northern Ireland forced the Unionist community to revisit its identity – an identity rooted in allegiance to Great Britain. Any so-called ‘crisis of confidence’ in Unionism has profound implications for the entire peace process. The Good Friday/Belfast Agreement’s ‘creative ambiguity’ has also had implications for identity in Northern Ireland. In 1998, the different sides understood the Agreement differently and had different expectations from it – with Unionists perceiving the Agreement as a final solution and Nationalists perceiving the Agreement as the first step on the road to a united Ireland. As the Agreement has failed to live up to these expectations, the Unionist community in particular has perceived its identity as increasingly under threat.

Identity is a critical issue for conflict resolution because, 1) if the people aren’t ready a political deal is unlikely to hold, and 2) if the people are ready a better political deal is more likely. While there is much cynicism regarding community relations/people-to-people work, Liam suggested that there is little alternative. Moreover, effective community relations/people-to-people work can evolve into Track II (citizen) diplomacy.

- 2.4 Sammy Douglas, East Belfast Partnership, stated that he was interested to note that Professor Sabella’s presentation had emphasised Palestinian identity rather than religious identity. Sammy posed the question, ‘can anyone take Palestinian identity away?’ He went on to describe how Ian Paisley, leader of the DUP in Northern Ireland (and staunchly pro-Union) has stated he could live in a united Ireland because of the strength of his fundamentalist faith.
- 2.5 A participant suggested that Palestinians have at least three identities including a national identity, a local territorial identity and an identity based on their socio-economic status. There is a dynamic between these three identities. The greatest challenge lies in building an identity linked to a Palestinian state.

- 2.6 Yasser described how for him and thousands of others living in Jerusalem, Palestinian identity is about being a ‘guest’ in an occupied land. Amos Gil, Ir Amim, added that Israelis also have many different opposing and conflicting identities and suggested that Israeli society may not be able to sustain all of these different identities internally.
- 2.7 Participants discussed how dialogue groups do not always have to work on what they have in common and should not be afraid to recognise difference. Organisations can encourage people to explore their differences, for example, in relation to politics but always in a personal way. This approach can bring internal and external success. That is, participants learn about others (the external) and also become more critical and questioning of themselves (the internal).
- 2.8 The group examined the difficulties of conducting dialogue groups in situations of asymmetrical power relations. Eetta suggested a manifestation of these difficulties is that there seems to be more Israelis than Palestinians ready to participate in dialogue groups.

Emerging Themes

- Much of the discussion centred on the role of identity in the transformation of conflict. Collective identity was discussed as something shaped by:
 - 1) internal factors within each group;
 - 2) relations with adversary groups; and
 - 3) the social context of the groups’ interaction.

The key question raised during the discussion seemed to be whether identities can and do change. Those in the group who felt the answer to this question to be yes, were then interested in how we can create spaces and processes that encourage people to develop a positive sense of identity that will bring about changes in relationships and behaviour and thereby transform the nature of conflict itself. Negotiation and redefinition of identity requires interactions with ‘others’ as well as inner reflection with the self, and dialogue can therefore be a useful tool. Generally, the group felt it should be acknowledged that conflict resolution and peacebuilding requires processes that more explicitly address issues around identity.

- The group highlighted the importance of being attentive to people's perceptions of how identity is linked to power and the systems and structures that organise and govern their relationships. This is particularly important for people who feel their identity is being eroded, marginalised or under threat. When addressing identity-based concerns,

processes must strive to understand the roots of people's perceptions and address the systemic changes needed to assure access and respectful participation.

Session Three: Education
21ST April 2005, 11:30-13:30
Participants

Yasser Abu Khater - *Al Quds University*
Zvi Bekerman - *Hebrew University*
Nora Carmi - *Sabeel Center*
Sammy Douglas - *East Belfast Partnership*
Grace Fraser - *Conflict Researcher*
Tom Fraser - *University of Ulster*
Amos Gil - *Ir Amim*
Joanne Hughes - *University of Ulster*
Maya Kahanoff - *Truman Institute, Hebrew University*
Kevin LaFleur - *Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group*
Helen Lewis - *INCORE*
Liam Maskey - *Intercomm*
Rab McCallum, *North Belfast Interface Network*
Frank Murphy, *Belfast Local Strategy Partnership*
Rami Nasrallah, *International Peace & Cooperation Center*
Benjamin Pogrud - *Yakar Center*
Eetta Prince-Gibson - *Ir Amim*
Sara Reeske
Walid Salem - *PANORAMA*
Bernard Sabella - *Bethlehem University*
Fedel Tahboub - *Peace & Democracy Forum*
Emelyne Vernet - *Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group*

- 3.1 Joanne Hughes, University of Ulster, began the discussion by describing the history of segregation in Northern Ireland's educational system. She commented on the development of an 'All Children Together' campaigning parent group that resulted in the establishment of the first integrated school, Lagan College, in Belfast in 1981. Since then Education Reform legislation has made provision for integrated education – both for the establishment of new schools and transformation of existing schools. There are currently 57 integrated schools comprising 19 integrated second level colleges and 38 integrated primary schools. In addition there are 19 integrated nursery schools.

Joanne explored the impact of integrated schools in Northern Ireland. She suggested that past pupils from integrated schools may have an increased respect for diversity and a greater number of mixed friends. Moreover, there is continued support for the concept of integrated education, demonstrated by the increasing number of parents all over Northern Ireland who seek integrated education for their children. A major problem however, is that teachers are still trained in a segregated system. Teachers may therefore not feel comfortable raising sensitive issues around the

backgrounds, religion and history of those from ‘the other side’ in the integrated classroom.

- 3.2 Zvi Beckerman, Hebrew University argued that, in general, most Israelis and Palestinians receive a poor education. However, the first bilingual school, providing education in Arabic and Hebrew, was opened in Jerusalem in 1984. Zvi described the work of the Centre for Jewish-Arab Education in bringing together Jewish and Arab children in a learning environment to encourage the two cultures to live side-by-side in peace, harmony and mutual understanding. Schools opened by the Centre have two teachers – one Jewish and one Arab – in each classroom, and instruct from a bilingual and bicultural curriculum. Classes contain equal numbers of Arab and Jewish children, and teachings include both Jewish and Arab culture and observances. Zvi noted that bilingual schools face problems in relation to their sustainability, as it is extremely costly to provide two teachers for each class of 20 students. However, he also described the success of bilingual schools (in contrast to Northern Ireland) in *explicitly* addressing sensitive issues around students’ different backgrounds, religion, culture and history. In fact, Zvi felt this approach was essential to the success of the schools as failure to emphasise difference could result in parents of students attending the schools being labelled as ‘traitors.’
- 3.3 Yasser Khater suggested that education for human rights must come before education for peace. He described how many Palestinian students’ right to education is jeopardised by, for example, students struggling to attend classes because of roadblocks, checkpoints and restrictions on travel. Palestinian universities also suffer from significant lack of funds and resources.
- 3.4 A representative from the Middle East Children’s Association (MECA) discussed the work of the Association in implementing programmes in the educational systems of both cultures to explore tolerance, difference, human rights, democracy, and mutual respect. MECA allows Israeli and Palestinian teachers to learn about one another and to work together to influence educational systems. Groups of teachers meet on a regular basis to develop curricula for their students that would promote an understanding of each other's culture and promote pluralism. In the process of creating programmes, the teachers themselves explore these issues, create personal bonds, break down their own stereotypes and positively influence thousands of students. Education can be described as having two main goals, 1) to prepare students to deal with the realities in which they are living, and 2) to equip students to create and change realities. In a conflict situation, it is particularly difficult to strike a balance between these two goals. Peace education is generally perceived as being about infusing values. However, this poses something of a moral

dilemma as, ‘who are we to indoctrinate our values?’ Peace education can still be justified however, not as a tool, but as a specific response to needs on the ground, because both teachers and children must be equipped to cope with living in conflict. There are still tensions around peace education and whether joint/integrated/bilingual education necessarily brings about the outcome we want.

- 3.5 A member of the group noted that the situation in Israel and Palestine differs significantly to that in Northern Ireland because education in the latter has been subject to significant legislative reform and new sources of institutional support.
- 3.6 Joanne noted that at first Catholics in Northern Ireland were relatively uninterested in integrated education due to the perception that to advocate integrated education would be to treat the symptoms rather than the root causes of the conflict. It was therefore crucial that education reform was presented as part of a package of reform including, for example, fair employment legislation.
- 3.7 The group discussed curricula for peace education and were particularly interested in hearing about the development of a new citizenship curriculum for Northern Ireland including modules on topics such as Equality and Justice, Parading, Policing, Democracy and Active Participation and Local Government, Homelessness, Diversity, Resolving Differences, Sport and Diversity, and European Citizenship.
- 3.8 One participant described their experience with children successfully developing their own programmes out of initial contact meetings, leading to friendships between communities. However, practical issues such as restrictions on movement and travel often intervene and hinder progress.
- 3.9 Concern was expressed that students often fail to receive recognition for their studies at Jerusalem University.
- 3.10 Grace Fraser, Conflict Researcher, noted that because it was conflict that produced integrated schools in Northern Ireland, many of these schools are having to adjust to the fact that violent conflict in the province is, by and large, now over. Some are beginning to say ‘we’re becoming normal’ and express concern about what their future role and mandate should be. Grace described the difficulty in measuring the impact of integrated schools, as many of their outcomes are long-term and intangible – rather than simply correct or incorrect.
- 3.11 In response to earlier comments that education for human rights needs to come before education for peace, Benjamin Pogrud, Yakar Center, drew parallel to the children’s rebellion ‘no education before liberation’ he

witnessed in South Africa during the 1980's. While the rebellion undoubtedly contributed to the fall of apartheid it also had catastrophic consequences for the future of youth in the country.

- 3.12 Zvi suggested that it is possible to over-emphasise the importance of education as the key indicator for future well-being. In fact, research suggests it is the socio-economic status of a child's parents that may be the key determinant.

Wrap-up/Concluding Session Friday 22nd, 13:30-15:00

Participants

Yasser Abu Khater - *Al Quds University*
Sammy Douglas - *East Belfast Partnership*
Grace Fraser - *Conflict Researcher*
Tom Fraser - *University of Ulster*
Amos Gil - *Ir Amim*
Joanne Hughes - *University of Ulster*
Helen Lewis - *INCORE*
Liam Maskey - *Intercomm*
Rab McCallum, *North Belfast Interface Network*
Frank Murphy, *Belfast Local Strategy Partnership*
Eetta Prince-Gibson - *Ir Amim*
Walid Salem - *PANORAMA*

- 4.1 The group was invited to reflect on its experiences over the past few days. Amos Gil, Ir Amim, noted that the value of comparing Northern Ireland and Jerusalem comes from learning about not only the similarities, but the differences between the two situations. He suggested that discussions, in particular the session on community development, could have benefited from greater focus on specific examples of projects. Amos also recommended that a future area of activity for the Belfast-Jerusalem Civil Society Partnership could be to develop a programme of placements/work-shadowing. This would be aimed at providing practitioners from Jerusalem and Belfast with the experience of spending time and working on the ground in non-governmental/community-based organisations in the two different cities.
- 4.2 Walid Salem, PANORAMA felt that the session comparing community development in Belfast and Jerusalem had been particularly fruitful and held great potential for future comparative research. He also described his interest in further exploring two issues, 1) whether identities are fixed or transformed and therefore whether it may be possible to develop a joint Jerusalem identity, and 2) the development of citizenship education in Northern Ireland.

- 4.3 Eetta Prince-Gibson, Ir Amim noted that frustration with the length of the discussion sessions was a great sign of their richness. Eetta suggested a key question for the Belfast-Jerusalem Civil Society Partnership is ‘how can research sit on practical programmes?’ She was also struck by a number of themes that emerged over the few days, 1) the issue of change, how it comes about and why, 2) the lesson of inclusion that can be drawn from the Northern Ireland experience, 3) the role of the media in conflict, and 4) how enriching it is to compare and contrast knowledge and experience.
- 4.4 Yasser Abu Khater, Al Quds University, highlighted the session on education as having been of particular importance.
- 4.5 Liam Maskey, Intercomm, agreed with Amos’s suggestion for a programme of placements/work-shadowing to support the work of the Belfast-Jerusalem Civil Society Partnership. He also recommended the group consider a series of videoconferences to explore some of the themes that had come up over the past few days in greater detail, and to facilitate working relationships between academics and practitioners in both cities.
- 4.6 Joanne Hughes, University of Ulster, suggested that academics could work to support practitioners during their various placements in Belfast and Jerusalem, and to develop practice-oriented research material around themes emerging from the videoconferences. Joanne noted that over the coming months she hopes to produce an academic article examining the Belfast-Jerusalem Civil Society Partnership as a case study of academics and practitioners working together. She suggested it might also be interesting to produce a special edition of a social policy journal focusing on, for example, community development in Northern Ireland and Jerusalem.
- 4.7 Rab McCallum, North Belfast Interface Network, described how he felt challenged by his visit to Jerusalem. Whilst the programme had been extremely intensive, Rab felt this level of intensity was necessary to expose him to the full variety of perspectives. His experiences over the few days had encouraged him reflect on the importance of identifying and nurturing future leadership, and the importance of continuing dialogue even when participants feel it is leading nowhere.
- 4.8 Sammy Douglas, East Belfast Partnership, stated that he felt disillusioned in the positive sense of having had his preconceptions about Jerusalem challenged. Sammy said that something that would stay with him was the friendliness of all the people he had met during his visit. He suggested that community policing was an area of potential collaboration between Northern Ireland and Jerusalem and one that could perhaps be further

explored through videoconferencing. A Belfast-Jerusalem web site could also be a useful addition to the work of the Partnership – it would facilitate communication between the two cities and provide a useful venue for publication of practice-oriented research. Sammy also echoed Amos’s suggestion for a programme of placements. His only criticism of the conference proceedings was that it did not expose him to an extreme pro-Israeli view.

- 4.9 Tom Fraser, University of Ulster, noted that he felt a positive dynamic had developed between participants that would help sustain the work of the Belfast-Jerusalem Civil Society Partnership in the future. The next big issue to be addressed however, would be that of future funding. Tom emphasised that future outcomes of the Partnership must include both active projects on the ground and strong academic work.
- 4.10 Frank Murphy, Belfast LSP, described how being a funder can make him cynical about community development, however, it also gives him a different insight into its various processes and he was pleased to have been able to share his insights with the rest of the participants over the course of the few days. Frank noted that his experiences in Jerusalem have convinced him that Northern Ireland needs to work towards being ever more outward looking, and stated that he hopes to include this emphasis in the new integrated strategy for Belfast being developed by Belfast LSP.
- 4.11 Helen Lewis, INCORE, University of Ulster, agreed to develop an action plan for the Belfast-Jerusalem Civil Society Partnership to include three main strands of activity:
 1. A series of videoconferences to take place between Belfast and Jerusalem, and development of a web site for the Belfast-Jerusalem Civil Society Partnership.
 2. Academic support for those participating in placements and development of practice-oriented research around conference themes and the Partnership.
 3. A programme for placements at non-governmental/community-based organisations in Belfast and Jerusalem.
- 4.12 Amos suggested the Partnership consider drawing upon the experiences of the New Israel Fund and Genesis from Montreal because both have successful academic and placement programmes and the B-JCSP may benefit from learning from them.

Participant Evaluations of B-JCSP Conference: April 2005

“This trip was not only informative but it gave practitioners here the opportunity to inform others of the pitfalls, benefits and challenges of the peacebuilding work we have all been involved in.”

“My participation in the project was hugely beneficial in that it has broadened my knowledge of three issues, 1)the Palestinian/Israeli project, 2) the need for genuine and directed academic and community partnerships in relation to conflict analysis, recording and evaluation, and 3) the benefits of intergroup learning between the community and voluntary, academic and funder sectors.”

“I would be keen to involve other people from East Belfast...if anything, the comparison between Belfast and Jerusalem would encourage others and show clearly how our peace process has moved forward.”

“This has been an excellent opportunity to learn more about community capacity building and development in Northern Ireland, Israel and Palestine.”

“Seeing other situations of conflict helps one to keep perspective, learn and be positive.”

IMPACT

Initiatives aimed at sharing Northern Ireland’s experience of peacemaking and peacebuilding internationally have had a number of important outcomes. Indeed, evidence emerging from the work of the Belfast-Jerusalem Civil Society Partnership (B-JCSP), as well as INCORE and Intercomm’s broader experience in this area, suggests this type of work can:

- Facilitate the transfer and replication of policies and practices between different countries, conflicts and contexts;
- Contribute to the development of evidence-based and ‘best practice’ policy and practice;
- Generate new insights and deeper understanding of peace and reconciliation issues; and
- Build local peacebuilding capacity – in particular, by broadening perspectives and bringing hope.

Definitions of Peacemaking and Peacebuilding

Peacemaking can be defined as the diplomatic effort intended to move a violent conflict into nonviolent dialogue, where differences are normally settled through representative political institutions. The objective of peacemaking is to end the violence between the contending parties. A peace

agreement is the desired end result of negotiations. Peacemaking can be done through negotiation, mediation, conciliation, arbitration and international law.

Peacebuilding is a process that facilitates the establishment of durable peace and tries to prevent the recurrence of violence by addressing root causes and effects of conflict through reconciliation, institution building and political as well as economic transformation. Peacebuilding initiatives are not limited to the post-conflict environment, but are also critical to preventing conflicts. An agenda for peacebuilding should also be integrated into peace agreements and peacekeeping missions.

Adapted from *The Conflict Management Toolkit* [online], The Johns Hopkins University School for Advanced International Studies (SAIS). Available from: <http://cmtoolkit.sais-jhu.edu/index.php?name=pb-overview> [Accessed 17 September 2005].

Transfer and Replication

Policies and practices cannot simply be imported; and differences between countries, conflicts and contexts cannot simply be ignored. However, this does not mean peacemaking/peacebuilding policies and practices cannot be transferred and replicated. Rather, they must be carefully adapted to fit local circumstances when doing so.

This has been the approach taken when Northern Ireland has sought to draw on South Africa's knowledge and experience of transition. For example, rather than simply copying South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) model wholesale, Northern Ireland has begun to develop a victims support policy that covers many of the issues addressed by the TRC such as compensation for victims of political violence, recognition and acknowledgement of suffering, and the need for trauma care and counselling.^x

Based on its work to date, the B-JCSP has identified a number of areas in which it feels it can successfully promote the transfer and replication of peacemaking/peacebuilding policies and practices between Belfast and Jerusalem. These include:

- Reproduction of Intercomm's inter-community housing project currently operating in North Belfast in Gaza and the West Bank. Using the skills of local builders and tradesmen, this Intercomm project modernises and refurbishes houses otherwise left abandoned and derelict thereby providing affordable, quality homes and employment in interface areas greatly in need of housing and economic rejuvenation.
- The establishment of locally-based partnership structures in Jerusalem to mirror Local Strategy Partnerships (LSP's) used in Northern Ireland to distribute and deliver European funding.

The Partnership hopes to achieve this by developing and sustaining working relationships between relevant policymakers, practitioners and academics in Belfast and Jerusalem. These relationships will be fostered through B-JCSP's ongoing series of international conferences and study visits, as well as a new programme of work placements, mentoring and videoconferences between the two cities.

Evidence-based Peacebuilding

Evidence-based policy and practice has become a priority for funders and governments. It is also of relevance to all those interested in 'what works' and in making the best use of scarce resources. Sharing knowledge and experience of peacemaking/peacebuilding promotes evidence-based policy and practice because it is driven by a common interest in taking peace processes *forward*. Hence, this type of international exchange naturally tends to focus on 'good practice' and 'lessons learned', rather than merely historical or descriptive accounts of peacemaking and peacebuilding.

For example, during a B-JCSP study visit to Jerusalem, one participant noted that it was not until he was asked about how Northern Ireland deals with the issue of corruption in relation to the distribution of funding, that he realised how much experience Northern Ireland has to offer in this area. Indeed, because Northern Ireland has put so many policies and procedures in place to deal with corruption it has become almost entirely routine. In the words of this participant, "we take so many processes like that for granted...(but) you get to a different set of people that ask you questions and...you start to question everything you do and why you do it."

The B-JCSP is committed to capturing the knowledge that emerges in the course of its work. The Partnership is therefore founded on the premise that all of its activities will involve some aspect of academic and practice-oriented research.

Evidence-based Practice

Evidence-based practice can be thought of as requiring:

- **Know-about problems:** e.g. knowledge of current peace and reconciliation issues and efforts directed at them.
- **Know-what works:** i.e. what policies, strategies, interventions will bring about positive change.
- **Know-how** to put into practice: knowing what should be done is not the same as being able to do it effectively.
- **Know-who** to involve: e.g. what key stakeholders must be involved.
- **Know-why:** knowledge about why action is required e.g. relationship to values.

Adapted from Nutley, S., Walter, I., Davies, H., 2003, "From Knowing to Doing: A Framework for Understanding the Evidence-Into-Practice Agenda," *Evaluation*. Vol 9 (2): 125-148.

Bridging the Gap

More generally, B-JCSP aims to bridge the gap between the worlds of academia, policy and practice – both in terms of its core organisational membership and in terms of its programmes and activities. Policymakers, practitioners and academics engaged in the field of peace and conflict work are held together by a “common sense of purpose and a real need to know what each other knows.”^{xi} The unfortunate reality however, is that despite the exponential expansion of peace and conflict research since the late 1950’s, this “body of academic knowledge and expertise remains unused.”^{xii}

This can partly be attributed to the fact that the worlds of academia, policy and practice each have their own set of values, ideologies, language, timeframes, reward systems and communication styles. The Partnership aims to overcome these different working cultures by focusing the energies of researchers, practitioners and policymakers on bringing about constructive change; whilst also providing informal and social space in which these different actors can develop a better understanding of each other’s working contexts.

The core members of the B-JCSP come from very different organisational backgrounds – including academia, policy and practice. Rather than getting caught up on whether each of these organisations are ‘equal,’ the Partnership acknowledges its differences and commits to working across them – focusing on “bringing balance to partnership.”^{xiii}

Critically, academics involved in the B-JCSP not only research and write-up activities after the event, but support and work with participants in the Partnership’s programmes and activities on an ongoing basis – acting as a sort of ‘critical friend’ when and where necessary. This is important, as practitioners are traditionally seen as the ‘subjects’ of research. As a result, they often they hold little decision-making power and often they do not benefit from either the research or its outcomes. Unsurprisingly, this approach “has created mistrust of both academics and the research process by community groups.”^{xiv}

Recommendations for Partnership

On the basis of B-JCSP’s experience to date, partnering internationally means paying special attention to:

- Spending time and resources on building relationships between partners;
- Avoiding hierarchical structures and creating an atmosphere of balance;
- Understanding the different pressures each partner is under;
- Making sure the project benefits all partners;
- Developing shared ownership of all programmes and activities;
- Operating as transparently as possible;
- Facilitating cross-cultural communication.

New Insights and Deeper Understanding

By encouraging people to identify, analyse and explain similarities and differences between situations, international comparative work obliges people to venture outside their own frames of reference. In some cases, participants may be able to establish that shared phenomena can be explained by the same causes. For example, when discussing community development work in Belfast and Jerusalem during B-JCSP's April conference, participants agreed that in both cities definitions of 'community' vary according to whether people relate to one another on the basis of geography/place, identity or common interest.

Ten Lessons Drawn from Northern Ireland

During a B-JCSP study visit to Ramallah, a group of Palestinians drew the following ten lessons from Northern Ireland's experience of peacemaking and peacebuilding:

1. Make friends internationally with other governments and states.
2. Make use of international treaties and systems.
3. Violence can be counterproductive.
4. Ceasefires can pay huge political dividends.
5. Ensure the peace process and peace settlement is inclusive.
6. Question the viability of partition as a long-term solution.
7. Promote economic growth.
8. Follow rights-based strategies and approaches.
9. Put history aside and focus on the future.
10. Build a strong civil society.

On the other hand, international comparison may force participants to explain how their situation is specific. For example, during the same discussion about community development, a number of participants noted that in both Belfast and Jerusalem certain communities have engaged in community development to a greater extent than others. In the case of Belfast, this can be attributed to the fact that Protestants have historically perceived community development to be an activity that involves challenging the state and 'betraying' their government; whilst in the case of Jerusalem, the idea of Palestinian society participating in Jerusalem has been absent since the 1967 war. In either case, whether by encouraging participants to generalise from the specific, or to articulate and explain their differences, international comparative work generates more questions, fresh insights and deeper understandings.

However, the success of B-JCSP's work in this regard depends on effective cross-cultural communication. All communication can be thought of as cultural, because it draws "on ways we have learned to speak and nonverbal messages."^{xv} Therefore even with the best of intentions, misunderstandings are inevitable when trying to share knowledge and experience between different countries, conflicts and contexts.

Before engaging in international comparative work, it is extremely important to try and prepare for the ways in which communication varies across cultures. In its experience, the Partnership has found it particularly important to pay attention to different ideas, attitudes and behaviours around issues like time-keeping, room layout, and dress to name just a few. Furthermore, it is critical to establish a common understanding of central concepts, for example, whether ‘single-identity’ work in Northern Ireland is equivalent to what is described as ‘uni-national’ work in Israel/Palestine.

Building Local Peacebuilding Capacity

Activities aimed at sharing knowledge and experience of peacebuilding/peacemaking between different countries, develops broader and more outward looking perspectives amongst those who participate in them. As one participant in a B-JCSP study visit to Jerusalem noted, the experience was “a very good learning experience and I feel I have been challenged on my pre-conceived notions of the Israel/Palestine conflict.” Another stated that they valued the international learning experience because, “it is so easy to get parochial about your own situation and not even be aware of the bigger picture.”

This outcome is particularly important for Northern Ireland as broader and more outward-looking perspectives can help contribute to the development of a shared vision of Northern Ireland society – a task recently prioritised by *A Shared Future – Policy and Strategic Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland*.^{xvi}

“The Government’s vision for the future of Northern Ireland is for a peaceful, inclusive, prosperous, stable and fair society firmly founded on the achievement of reconciliation, tolerance, and mutual trust and the protection and vindication of human rights for all. It will be founded on partnership, equality and mutual respect as a basis of good relationships.”

OFM/DFM, 2005. *A Shared Future – Policy and Strategic Framework for Good Relations in Northern Ireland*, Belfast: OFM/DFM, p5.

Moreover, by obliging people to step outside their own frames of reference, as well as to reflect on and to raise questions about their work, international comparative work develops participants’ critical awareness and their capacity to collect and share their good practice. As one participant noted, “I personally have been working for about 5 years so much on the operational end of things that the other half of my brain has been closed down.” International comparative work thereby contributes to the development and effectiveness of peacebuilding policy and practice. More specifically, by promoting the collection and sharing of good practice, B-JCSP feels this type of learning helps:

- Capture and reuse past experience;
- Drive innovation;
- Map expertise; and
- Leads to greater efficiencies, lower costs and a higher quality of programmes and services.

Perhaps most significantly but least measurably, the Partnership has found that connecting people involved in peacebuilding work in different countries, conflicts and contexts brings hope. Interestingly, during any B-JCSP study visit it is common to hear Israelis and Palestinian saying how lucky they feel not to be living in a deeply segregated society like Northern Ireland; and at the same time hear Northern Irish participants talking about how lucky they feel never to have experienced violence on the scale of that in Israel/Palestine. It is particularly important that this feeling of being ‘lucky’ nearly always seems to prompt new recognition of ‘how far we have come’ amongst participants from Northern Ireland. Connecting people internationally in this way also establishes powerful networks that can act – formally and informally – as an ongoing source of support, information and resources.

Bringing people from a variety of community backgrounds together to present Northern Ireland’s experience of peacemaking and peacebuilding to international audiences also has a powerful impact on cross/inter-community relationships. In part, this is the result of participants travelling, socialising and working together to a far greater extent than normal. But it is also about participants being able to discuss sensitive issues removed from their own environments.

The Future

Whilst Northern Ireland does not have the answers to all the world’s problems and remains relatively insignificant on the global scale of conflict, it has accumulated significant knowledge and experience of peacemaking and peacebuilding to date. Having benefited from a unique and unprecedented European commitment to resolving our conflict, Northern Ireland has something of a moral responsibility to share this knowledge and experience with the rest of the world. There is also strong self-interest in doing so. Connecting Northern Ireland to other countries, conflicts and contexts can help build *local* capacity for better peacebuilding and, perhaps most importantly, bring renewed energy and hope to the project of achieving a shared, inclusive, peaceful and prosperous society for all.

The Belfast-Jerusalem Civil Society Partnership (B-JCSP) has been established to research, develop, share and disseminate skills and practices to help build communities, strengthen civil society and transform conflict in Jerusalem and Northern Ireland. Through dialogue, it has already generated fresh insights, more questions and deeper understandings of peacemaking and peacebuilding

work in both situations. The next phase of the Partnership will begin to support the direct transfer and replication of effective projects and programmes on the ground (whilst adapting them to fit local circumstances). This can only be achieved through developing and sustaining working relationships between relevant stakeholders in both cities.

Ultimately, the B-JCSP thereby aims to contribute to what John Paul Lederach describes as the primary task of conflict transformation, that is, “to generate creative platforms that can simultaneously address surface issues and change underlying social structures and relationship patterns.^{xvii}” Indeed, the Partnership is less about delivering specific activities and programmes than developing a way of working together into the long-term.

The work of the Belfast-Jerusalem Civil Society Partnership (B-JCSP) is currently supported through INCORE’s Local International Learning Project (LILP) funded by the EU Programme for Peace and Reconciliation within Measure 2:1, Reconciliation for Sustainable Peace, via the European Directorate of the Community Relations Council.

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