

Conflict Transformation Papers

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Conflict Transformation Papers

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Biblical Model of Peace Building

Billy Mitchell

Peace building is an imperative for those of us who profess to serve the Prince of Peace. It is not an optional extra but an integral part of our Christian service. Peace building is not a technique; it is a process through which we seek to move from violent responses to conflict through non-violent activism to a position of peace and reconciliation. Activism is about doing things that impact upon others. But it must first of all have an impact upon our own lives. If we are going to be serious about peace building we must live it out in our daily lives.

The terms peace and peace-building mean different things to different people. For many, peace is simply an end to violent responses to conflict by the other side. This was the peace imposed by imperial Rome under the Pax Romana and would appear to be the most popular view of peace held by many on both sides of the conflict in Northern Ireland today. People who adhere to this concept of peace will be satisfied with any process that leads to an ending of violence, whether structural or paramilitary, against their side. Such a negative peace may be achieved either through an imposed solution in their favour or by way of an overwhelming military victory of their side over the other. Concerns about social justice, equality and pluralism are secondary to establishing and maintaining a negative peace.

The Biblical view of peace is somewhat different to that of the Pax Romana. The Scriptural concept of peace is a state of being where not only is there an absence of violence but also an absence of social injustice and structural oppression. Christian peace-builders will be satisfied with nothing short of shalom where every citizen is enabled and empowered to live a holistic life of material, social and spiritual well-being¹.

The guiding principle for me as an individual seeking to bring about a transformation of the conflict in Northern Ireland is summed up in the words of Micah, the Hebrew Prophet, He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. (6:8 NIV) Two duties toward man are specified justice, or strict equity; and mercy, or a kindly abatement of what we might justly demand, and a hearty desire to do good to others². Restorative Justice lies at the heart of Christian peace building.

To act justly is to pursue equity and fairness. This is something that each of us must do for ourselves. No matter what people around us do, we are to act justly in all our dealings with our fellow citizens. If we, as individuals do not act justly as we interact with others, we will never see justice and if we never see justice we will never achieve the restoration and reconciliation that lays the foundations for shalom. Acting justly cannot right the wrongs of the past, but it can help to bind up and heal those hurts. More importantly, acting justly can make things right for the future.

Far too many evangelicals regard justice in purely legal terms. All too often it is regarded simply as punishment for wrongdoing. However the Biblical concept of justice reaches far beyond the imposition of penal sanctions. It seeks to address and tackle the conflicts of everyday life. Micah exhorts us to act justly whereas we often

talk about getting justice. Sadly, however, getting justice often means getting our pound of flesh. When we act justly we personally take steps to do what is right or to make things right. Justice is never complete until just relationships are fostered, developed and maintained between individuals within community. Acting justly is the pursuit of mutuality.

Acting justly is about developing just relationships between our fellow human beings and ourselves. It is about doing unto others what we would have them do unto us³. It is about restoring broken relationships by repairing the damage that has been done through injustice and conflict. It is about acknowledging that wrongs and injustices have taken place in our name as well as having been perpetrated against us, and it is about taking positive actions to ensure that such wrongs and injustices are never repeated by either side. These are things that we as individuals can and should do in our daily lives. They are not things that we should wait on others to do for us. The Lord calls upon us, as individuals, to act justly and to love mercy. While we wait passively for others to do it we are living in a state of personal disobedience to the divine command.

Acting justly will involve a measure of punishment or retribution for wrongdoing, but in all such circumstances punishment should be tempered with mercy. When people respond violently to conflict and cause harm and injury, justice must focus on meeting the needs of every one involved. Those of us who have suffered violence and injustice have the right to tell our story, to receive support from others, to experience justice, to seek restitution, and to grant forgiveness. Those of us who have inflicted violence and injustice need to be brought to justice, to accept responsibility for our actions, to acknowledge the hurt that we have caused, to make restitution, to seek forgiveness and to forsake violent and unjust responses to conflict. Society as a whole needs to accept responsibility for creating the conditions that have led to conflict and violence. Society must also work to create the conditions in which the conflicting parties can respond to each other non-violently, reach agreement, seek healing, and work for restoration and wholeness.

Acting justly and loving mercy go together. Acting justly is not about getting even or about settling the score. Nor is it about demanding our pound of flesh or about insisting on the full measure of the law. It is about working for the healing of all parties in any conflict, whether familial, civil, criminal, racial, or international. It is based on unconditional love and forgiveness; love of compatriots and love of enemies alike, love of victims and love offenders equally, because both our compatriots and our enemies, our victims and our offenders, are the objects of Gods love and hence the legitimate objects of our love and mercy.

The ultimate goal of justice is not meting out punishment to the other side, rather it is about is seeking to effectuate restoration and reconciliation with the other side. It is, therefore, a firm basis for constructive peace building. In offering equity and fairness to all it undermines the structural injustices that foster alienation, conflict and violence. In tempering punishment with mercy it excludes no one from the process of building a lasting peace, of reducing violence and of restoring broken relationships. Unlike conflict resolution and conflict management, the restorative justice model of peace building does not suggest that we simply eliminate or control conflict, but rather it calls upon us to transform the nature of the conflict.

Those of us who embrace the restorative justice model of peace building must endeavour to relate to all protagonists in the conflict, not merely to those whom we perceive to be on our side. Our objectives should be to increase mutual understanding, to reduce the spirit of adversarialness, to achieve political accommodation, to deliver social change and increase justice. To this end we must be open to hearing the truth as others see it as well as being quick to speak the truth as we see it. That is not to say that there are two truths, but there are often two (and more) perceptions of truth and perceptions are real for those whose attitudes and actions are influenced by them. It is only when we genuinely bring together and unpack different perceptions of truth that we can come to an objective knowledge of the truth.

The restorative justice model of peace building seeks first of all to transform the nature of the conflict, then to work at healing broken relationships, building trust and confidence and finally to lay the groundwork for finding solutions to our problems. It responds on the basis of human need for present healing and for future relationships. Both current and former participants in the conflict are regarded as a key resource in the peace building process. They are not mere recipients of imposed solutions but an essential part of the transforming, healing and restorative process. The building of shalom is an inclusive process.

Finally; the restorative justice model of peace building demands personal involvement. It is not a process for others. It is a process for us for me as an individual. It is the process that I am committed to and that has become a part of my way of life.

PRIME: Shared History Project as an example of a Peace Building Project under Fire¹.

Adwan, S; Bar-On, D2.

PRIME (Peace Research Institute in the Middle East)

Peace building is a planned activity, based on bottom-up processes, while peace making is a political agreement based on top-down processes. We usually believe that a peace process can become sustainable only when the two are synchronized. For example, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in South Africa was a political agreement, compromising the interests of both sides, which took into account also the bottom up needs of acknowledgement of past atrocities and taking personal responsibility for them, letting 22,000 victims of the Apartheid give testimonies. Along this analysis, the Oslo accord gave a political opportunity (and hope) to synchronize the top-down and bottom-up processes in the Israeli and Palestinian conflict. Many bottom-up projects were initiated as a result of such a hope alas these hopes were shattered by the outbreak of the bloody conflict in October 2000, after the failure of the Camp David talks.

It is quite clear, that when there is no on-going top-down peace-making initiative, the peace-building activities can not bring about peace all by themselves (see Maoz, this volume). Therefore they should become more modest in their goals: They have to focus on maintaining the ability of mutual positive interactions of the peace builders (the idea of islands of sanity), and/or prepare the ground by initiating small projects that could become widespread once a future synchronization with top-down initiatives will take place. Again, to take the example of South Africa, the agreement of the TRC in the nineties did not take place in a vacuum. Black and white cadres were prepared for more than thirty years, in isolated, mostly Christian refuges, which served as such Islands of sanity under the most severe external conditions.

This perspective is based on a more mature conclusion that peace processes of intractable conflicts are not linear, have ups and downs and need a long-term commitment of the peace builders rather than momentary conjectural optimism or opportunism. We will present here a project of a joint school booklet which we developed with Palestinian and Israeli teachers at PRIME during one of the most violent period of the conflict, in 2001, and which helped us maintain our Island of sanity while developing a project that could become widespread in times of future peace agreements. At the present stage we did not try to advertise it or bring it to the attention of the ministries of education, because the public and the ministries were paralyzed and haunted by the conflict, not the peace process and we estimated that such attempts would hamper the possibility of future dissemination, rather than accommodate them. Our project was based on a more realistic approach, that at present stage of hostility and violence, the Israeli Jews and the Palestinians are not able to develop a joint narrative of their history (and we do not expect them to do so under the current conditions). Never the less, in the meantime they could learn to acknowledge and live with the fact that there are at least two competing narratives to account for their past, present and future. We assumed that this is an essential intermediate phase, in the process of learning one about the other, legitimizing the other's valid reasoning.

In periods of war and conflict, societies and nations tend to develop their own narratives, which from their perspective become the only true and morally superior narrative. These narratives devalue and even dehumanize their enemy's right for a narrative. If the enemy's narrative is described at all, it is presented as being morally inferior and the enemy is depicted as a faceless, immoral with irrational or manipulative views. These narratives become embedded into everyday culture, into the national and religious festivals, into the media and into children's school textbooks. Textbooks are the formal representations of the society's ideology and its ethos. They impart the values, goals, and myths that the society wants to instil into the new generation (Apple, 1979; Bourdieu, 1973; Luke, 1988). Children growing up during times of war and conflict know only the narrative of their people. This narrative is supposed to convince them, overtly and covertly, of the need to dehumanize the enemy. It usually indoctrinates children to a rationale that justifies the use of power to subjugate the enemy. This not only causes the development of narrow and biased understandings among children, but also leads to the development of negative attitudes and values towards the Other (Levinas, 1990).

This state of affairs is true also for the Palestinian/Israeli situation. Research on textbooks shows how each side, Palestinian as well as Israeli, presents its own narratives. In an analysis of 1948 Palestinian refugees' problem (Adwan & Firer, 1997, 1999) in Palestinian and Israeli textbooks since 1995, both sides failed to talk about the complexity of the refugee so problem. The Israeli texts put most of the blame on the Palestinians and the Arabs for the refugees' plight, while the Palestinian texts mainly blamed the Israelis and the British. The texts even fail to agree on the facts, e.g., the numbers of 1948 Palestinian refugees. Israelis write that there were between 600- 700,000 Palestinians who became refugees as a result of the 1948 war, while Palestinians wrote that there were more than one million Palestinians who became refugees as a result of the 1948 fighting.

Another comprehensive analysis of narratives of the conflict/relation in Palestinian and Israeli history and civic education (Firer and Adwan, 1999) shows that the texts reflect a culture of enmity. The terminology used in the texts had different meanings. What was positive on one side was negative on the other side. For example, the 1948 War in the Israeli texts is called The War of Independence while in the Palestinian text it is called *ÖAl-Naqbah* (The Catastrophe). While Israeli texts refer to the first Jewish immigrants to Palestine as the pioneers the Palestinian texts refer to them as gangs and terrorists. The heroes of one side are the monsters of the other. Also, most of the maps in the texts eliminate the cities and towns of the other side. The texts show the delegitimization of each other's rights, history and culture. There is also no recognition of each other's sufferings. The Holocaust is barely mentioned in Palestinian texts, and likewise the trauma of Palestinians is ignored in the Israeli texts. The findings show also that both sides textbooks fail to include the peaceful periods of coexistence between Jews and Palestinians.

Daniel Bar-Tal (1995) analyzed the content of 124 Israeli school books from 1975-1995. According to Bar-Tal in times of intractable conflict each side develops beliefs about the justness of its own goals, beliefs about security, beliefs about delegitimizing the opponents, beliefs of positive self image, beliefs about patriotism, beliefs about unity and beliefs about peace. These beliefs constitute a kind of ethos that supports the continuation of the conflict. The study showed that beliefs about security were

emphasized in the Israeli textbooks. There was rarely delegitimization of Arabs but most of the text stereotype Arabs negatively.

We therefore decided to develop an innovative school booklet that contains two narratives, the Israeli narrative and the Palestinian narrative around certain dates or miles stones in the history of the conflict. This would mean that each student will learn also the narrative of the other, in addition to the familiar own narrative, as a first step toward acknowledging and respecting the other. We assumed that a joint narrative would emerge only after the clear change from war culture to peace culture took place. This requires time and the ability to mourn and work through the painful results of the past. We could not expect this to take place while the conflict was still going on. In addition, we had to consider the roles of teachers. Studies have shown that teachers have more power than the mere written texts in forming children's understandings and value systems (Nave & Yogev, 2002; Angvis & von Borris, 1997). As a result, this project focuses on the central role of the teachers in the process of using shared history texts in the classroom. The teachers should therefore develop these narratives and try them out with their ninth and tenth grade classrooms, after the booklet has been translated into Arabic and Hebrew. There will be an empty space between the narratives for the pupils and teachers to add their own responses.

The Participants

The co-founders of Peace Research in the Middle East (PRIME), Sami Adwan and Dan Bar-On, and two history professors, Prof. Adnan Massallam (Bethlehem University) and Prof. Eyal Nave (Tel Aviv University and the Kibbutzim Teachers Seminar in Tel Aviv), chose the team to work on this project. The team includes six Palestinian history and geography teachers, six Jewish Israeli history teachers and six international delegates, as well as one Jewish Israeli observer. The Palestinian teachers, who are from Hebron, Bethlehem and East Jerusalem, had never before participated in dialogue encounters with Israelis. Several of the Israeli teachers, who teach in high schools in the centre and north of Israel, had participated in previous encounters with Palestinians.

The Process

All the participants convened four times for three days workshops at the New Imperial Hotel in the Old City of Jerusalem in March, June and August 2002 and in January 2003. As the political and the military situations were very fragile, it was unclear until the last minute whether the Palestinian teachers would get permits to enter Jerusalem, or if they would be able to reach the places where the permits were issued. The workshops were called off several times, but each time we found ways and the energy to call them on again and finally we succeeded to make them happen, mostly with full participation.

As the project operated within the reality of the conflict, it is critical to note the contexts from which the participants came. First, while the situation on both sides was bleak, difference and asymmetry existed with respect to the intensity of the general realities on the ground. For Palestinians, the reality has an unrelenting effect on day-to-day life with experiences of occupation and living under the thumb of the Israeli army. This translates into restricted freedom of movement, curfews, borders

checkpoints and a lot of fear of shootings, killings and house demolitions. Most have suffered serious losses and have had their own home or that of relatives damaged. Meanwhile, for Israelis, because of Palestinian suicide attacks, the every day reality reflects itself mostly in fear. This involves fear of riding buses, and of going downtown or anywhere with crowds. Many on both sides even fear sending their kids to school. Rather unsurprisingly, given the situation, faith and hope are commodities that have been difficult for both sides to hold on to – hence our sheer amazement at the fact that the seminars had such high participation and commitment. One of the Israeli teachers mentioned during the fourth seminar: This work over the last year was my only source of hope in the current desperate situation. A Palestinian teacher commented that we should look into other ways of resolving our conflict and this project is an example for such a way.

In the first (March 2002) workshop teachers got acquainted with each other by sharing personal details (the story behind my name) as well as other biographical stories. That was not an easy process to listen to stories that contained painful moments, which were related to the other's violence or oppression. But it was an important process because it enabled the teachers later to work together on their joint tasks more openly.

During this first workshop we formed three mixed task groups. Each task group created a list of all the events that were relevant to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and chose one event they would like to work on. In the plenary we followed this process and agreed on the three events: One group worked on the Balfour Declaration of 1917, another on the 1948 war and the third on the First Palestinian Intifada of 1987. A program was set up how the groups could communicate and develop their relevant narratives to be reviewed at the second workshop. Prof. Naveh and Prof. Mussalam provided their professional view of how such narratives should be developed and what should they be composed of. It was the role of the international participants to do some of the translations, when necessary, to summarize the task group's work and to write an evaluation at the end of each seminar. An additional flavour to our seminars were our evening strolls in the Old City of Jerusalem, which members of both groups did not do lately because of the severe security conditions. In a way we felt like in a self-created bubble, disconnected from our hostile surroundings.

In the second (June 2002) workshop, teachers actually developed their narratives, partially by working in the original task groups and partially by working in uni-national groups. We also devoted time to continue our personal acquaintance and joint walks as this became an important ingredient of this kind of work, especially in the current hostile atmosphere outside the group. Between the second and the third workshops the respective narratives were translated into Hebrew and Arabic, as the workshop's language was English.

During the third (August 2002) seminar the teachers had their first opportunity to read both narratives in their own native language, the way they will have to present these narratives to their pupils in the following year. This time, most of the work was done in the plenary and it was interesting to follow jointly how these narratives were accepted by the teachers. Most of the questions posed during these sessions were informative – Was the translation precise? Who was the person you mentioned in 1908? Why did you try to describe this event so shortly, while the others are described

at length? Interestingly, there were almost no attempts of delegitimization of the other's narrative. According to our interpretation, the fact that each side could feel safe with their own narrative made it easier to accept the other's narrative, being so different from one's own. At this workshop we learned about the sudden death of one of a Palestinian teacher from Hebron of cancer, while we were convening. There was some deliberation if we should stop the workshop, but the Palestinian teachers felt that he would have liked them to continue and they decided to stay and continue our work. The whole group later decided that his picture and a dedication would be in the opening page of the forthcoming joint booklet. The groups departed with the task to introduce corrections in their narratives as a result of the discussion and to develop a glossary for the teachers and the pupils, concerning definitions which the other side may not be familiar with.

In November 2002 the booklet was supposed to come out in Hebrew, Arabic and English. The teachers were then supposed to try it out in their classrooms, which meant that in this experimental phase already hundreds of Israeli and Palestinian pupils would be exposed to this new booklet. The following teacher's workshops would then be dedicated to get the pupils responses, make corrections, support the teachers in their work and develop more such narratives around additional dates. However, the continued and renewed curfews of the Palestinian towns and the additional necessary proof-readings did not enable us to follow this time table. Therefore, when we convened for our fourth workshop in January 2003, the booklet was not yet ready, but the texts were on paper and most of the teachers have at least tried them out in one classroom. We devoted the first day to listen to their evaluations of these initial testing and then devoted the second day to decide about three additional dates around which more narratives will be developed.

The teacher's reports of their classrooms were very interesting and diverse. For example, one Israeli teacher taught these texts in a classroom comprised predominantly by children of foreign workers, children of new immigrants (partially not Jewish) and Arab children. She had first to make them acquainted with the Israeli narratives (that many of them never learned about before) and only then introduce the Palestinian narrative. She was very creative in visualizing for her pupils what these texts actually represented. Her students could quite easily accept the two narratives as legitimate as they lacked the emotional involvement and identification with their narrative. Another Israeli teacher reported that his students were suspicious (are these texts really translated into Arabic and taught there?). Some students showed great interest and asked to take them home to study them further.

One of the Palestinian teachers had to ask the permission of his principal (who actually came to our workshop and showed great interest in our work). He gave his students the texts and invited them to his house to discuss them (as the school was closed because of the curfew). Another Palestinian teacher brought written reactions of her pupils. Some of them expressed an interest to meet Israeli pupils to discuss these texts together. Others wanted to know more about this date or that person, mentioned briefly in the texts. There were reports of students who right away started to deconstruct the other's narrative. In general there was a surprise effect by presenting the two narratives, a surprise that created interest and curiosity. We could feel a general feeling of ownership and accomplishment of the teachers from both

sides, in spite of the deteriorating external situation. They felt that they are creating something new for the future, which no one tried to do before.

During the second day the plenary discussed the general concept of the final book. Will we continue to focus on the historical aspects, or will we turn now to specific topics (like women, religions), or even to our contemporary situation? The plenary decided in favour of the historical continuity of the book and chose three additional dates: the twenties, 1936-1948 and the Six Days 1967 war. These additional dates will fill in the gaps among the initial dates (1917; 1948, the first Palestinian Intifada) and create a continuity of dates. The teachers divided the dates between them and committed themselves to prepare a draft for the following workshop. We decided to convene again in March 2003 to review these new narratives, in addition to further explore the testing of the initial narratives in more classrooms.

In the third year we plan to run a formal evaluation by comparing the bi-narrative classes with single narrative classes. In June 2004 we would like to have a conference at PRIME, where we will summarize the first experimental phase. We hope that by then to have a more positive political climate into which this work will fit in better. In the following second phase we would like to recruit more teachers and use the help of the first group of teachers as assistants for accommodating the new ones.

Summary

The conflict that took place around us often affected also our interactions. Yet, we continued to do the work, and we were rewarded with glimmers of hope and excitement about the implementation of this project in the schools. We acknowledged to each other that peace could only be a result of both sides winning; a peace in which only one side wins has no value. Someone said: The disarmament of history can happen only after the disarmament of weapons. But one can prepare it now. Events of the last months have highlighted the fact that without an informal peace process, involving face-to-face encounters between Jewish-Israeli and Palestinian peoples, a real and long-lasting peace will not be achieved even if a formal peace agreement has been signed by the leaders. It is important that the two processes (top-down peace-making & bottom-up peace-building) will be synchronized. Furthermore, the booklet these teachers are creating and their implementation of it will provide a concrete way to spread the effects outward of this face-to-face encounter between a small group of teachers. As Margaret Mead once said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world". In this case, "Never doubt that a small group of committed teachers -Palestinian and Israeli- can change the world" or at least one part of it, when the time will be ripe.

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Notes

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2 The order of the authors is alphabetical.

Is Peace building still relevant? Relationship building in the Israeli-Palestinian context

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Acknowledgment: This article was written while I was a visiting scholar in the Solomon Asch Center for Study of Ethnopolitical conflict at the University of Pennsylvania. I thank the center and especially Clark McCauley, Roy Eidelson, Brandon O'Leary and Paul Rosin for the support and enriching intellectual discussions.
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The question of relevance of peace building to societies in conflict seems to be especially poignant and painful in the context of the ongoing, intractable Middle East conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. A major goal of peace building activities is defined as prevention of further violence. In this respect, it is clear that Israeli-Palestinian peace building activities have not achieved their goal. The scores of people to people projects that were conducted after the signing of the Oslo peace accords, in September 1993, did not seem to prevent the collapse of the peace process and the re-emergence of severe violence between the sides, seven years later, in September 2000. But does this mean that peace building is irrelevant? That Israeli-Palestinian relationship building activities should stop now that the violence has renewed?

This article will discuss these questions while focusing on a specific type of peace building activities: dialogues and joint people to people projects at the grassroots level that aim to transform the relations between the sides through a process of constructive, open and mutually respectful communication. First, the concept of peace building will be briefly defined. Then, the current situation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will be described. This will be followed by a description and evaluation of Israeli-Palestinian peace building activities between 1993 and 2000. Finally, the question of relevance of peace building after the breakdown of the Oslo peace process and during the current cycles of violence between the sides will be discussed.

Definitions Of Peace Building

John Paul Lederach (1997) claimed that peace-building is more than just a post-conflict reconstruction, it encompasses, generates, and sustains a full array of processes, approaches, and stages needed to transform a conflict toward more sustainable, peaceful relationship. Peace building is described as involving a range of activities and structures before, during, and after formal peace agreement between parties are signed. It becomes especially important in intractable conflicts, where a history of hostility and frequent eruption of violence disrupts the normal functioning of society. Within this context, peace building attempts to transform the war-like behaviours of communities (Bercovitch & Kadayifci, 2002). Thus, peace building importantly focuses on prevention. The major purpose of peace-building activities is defined as preventing a relapse into violent conflict (Bercovitch & Kadayifci, 2002). In this article, I refer to a specific form of peace building that aims at transforming relationship between the parties through dialogues and other people to people joint

projects involving grassroots and middle level participants from both sides. These projects will be discussed in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian current situation.

The Current Situation Of The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

The conflict between Israeli-Jews and Palestinians is one of the most enduring and intractable conflicts of our time. The history of this conflict has known many dramatic turning points, with periods of severe violence following and being followed by serious attempts at peace making and peace building. In the context of the current upsurge in violence between the sides, a peaceful solution does not seem any closer than it seemed 50 years ago. Nevertheless, it was only a decade ago that prospects of resolving this conflict seemed high. In September 1993, after a long negotiation process that began with the Madrid peace summit in 1990, the Oslo peace accords between Israelis and Palestinians were signed. Following the signing of these peace agreements there was hope that a peaceful resolution of the conflict is near. However, a few years after later, it became clear that this optimism was premature. The failure of the Camp David negotiations left Palestinians and Israelis in a difficult impasse. Since late September 2000 and the eruption of the Al-Aqsa Intifada, relations between Israelis and Palestinians have further deteriorated and are characterized by escalation of violent and armed clashes and by a breakdown of the peace process.

One of the prominent trademarks of the Oslo process was the scores of peace building projects initiated by local and international organizations in order to improve the relationship between the sides not only on the official level of policy makers but also on the grassroots community level.

Israeli-Palestinian Peace Building Activities 1993-2000

Since the signing of the Oslo peace agreements in 1993, numerous programs of Israeli-Palestinian activities aimed at peace building were conducted each year (see Adwan & Bar-On, 2000; Chaitin, Obeidi, Adwan & Bar-On, 2002, Albeck, Adwan & Bar-On, in press). These meetings ranged from one-time, single events to long-term, continuous series of meetings, and from youth encounters to dialogues between schoolteachers, university students, university professors, and other professionals (Adwan & Bar-On, 2000).

Were these activities effective at improving relations between the sides? A study I did on Israeli-Palestinian youth reconciliation-aimed dialogue workshops conducted by IPCRI (Israel-Palestine Centre for Research and information)¹ indicates that they were. I will briefly describe this study here (for a more detailed description of this study see Maoz 2000c, for other evaluation studies of peace building and coexistence activities see Maoz, 2000a; 2000b; 2002).

Evaluation Of The IPCRI Dialogue Workshops

The workshops investigated were conducted in the spring of 1998, during the post-Oslo peace agreement era. A series of workshops were initiated with 15- and 16-year old youths (10th graders) from pairs of Israeli and Palestinian schools.

In the workshops, the youth from both sides met for two days to deal with social, cultural, and political issues through the sharing of personal narratives and discussions of the conflict. These workshops were organized and directed by the Israel-Palestine Centre For Research and Information (IPCRI), a jointly managed Israeli-Palestinian non-governmental organization (NGO), in the framework of a peace education project. The two days workshops consisted of a series of dialogue sessions between the youth, with most of these sessions including mixed groups of Israeli and Palestinian youth. Two group facilitators, an Israeli-Jew and a Palestinian, jointly led these meetings. However, in some of the sessions Israeli-Jews and Palestinians met separately, led by a facilitator of their nationality (Maoz, 2000c).

To examine whether participation in the dialogue activities actually transformed mutual attitudes, I compared participant's ratings of their stereotypic perceptions of each other before and after the workshop. Results showed that after participation in the workshops both Jews and Palestinians viewed each other as more considerate of others tolerant, and good hearted, than they did before it (Maoz, 2000c). These perceptions are directly relevant to the ability of sides to trust each other and to build peaceful relations between them.

While this study shows that dialogue peace building activities were effective in the micro level of improving mutual attitudes of Israeli and Palestinian youth (for other descriptions and evaluations of Israeli-Palestinian peace-building activities see Adwan & Bar-On, 2000; Chaitin et al., 2002; Albeck et al. in press), clearly peace building activities were not effective in the macro level of preventing the re-awakening of violence between the sides. This leads us to the question: Are peace building activities still relevant in the current violent phase of Israeli-Palestinian relations?

Israeli-Palestinian Peace Building After September 2000

The recent increase in violence between Israelis and Palestinians, since September 2000, creates difficulties in conducting peace building activities between the sides. However, even in this severe situation, some Israelis and Palestinian relationship buildings encounter projects continue to function. The questions confronting people that are still involved in these projects is: are these activities still relevant, given the collapse of the peace process and the failure to prevent the re-eruption of violence between the sides?

Looking at what is currently happening in this field, it seems that at least the more professional, established and committed organizations believe that these activities are still relevant and useful. Central peace building organizations and programs such as IPCRI (see Baskin, this issue, for description of activities) and PRIME (Peace Research Institute in the Middle East, see Bar-On & Adwan, this issue, for description of activities) are continuing to conduct joint relationship building projects that involve encounters and dialogues between the sides. Interviews with and written accounts of directors, moderators and participants of relationship building activities after September 2000, yielded 4 major, related, reasons for still conducting these activities in the current situation:

- 1) Maintaining an infrastructure of constructive relationships between the sides. Not letting the ties built be completely broken but keeping what can be preserved.
- 2) Holding a support system for those at both sides that still believe in peace.
- 3) Not letting the extremists win but still doing things for peace in the general atmosphere of violence.
- 4) Preventing further escalation of violence and mutual dehumanization and delegitimization by also maintaining some constructive interactions between the sides.

These reasons point to a more minimalistic and maybe more complex view of peace building (Bar-On & Adwan, this issue). Peace building is not viewed here as a complete solution to conflict or a device for total prevention of violence, but as a measure through which communities try to build and keep reservoirs of positive relations with each other in the face of an ongoing violent conflict between them. It is this minimalistic conception of peace building, that is generated from the wisdom of the field, by people that have been deeply and extensively committed to these activities for a long time, that makes relationship building activities still relevant (or even more so), during setbacks and breakdowns in peace processes such as in the Israeli-Palestinian case.

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Notes

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Promoting Non-Violence through Community Development

**Liam Maskey
Director of InterComm**

Liam Maskey was invited to convene a number of workshops with Palestinian activists to share personal experiences of community development, economic regeneration and peace building in Belfast. Due to the upsurge in the Israeli occupation and the accompanying military violence this was a difficult decision to take. However he did grasp the nettle and visited the region offering words of support and encouragement to those actively resisting the occupation by focusing on the needs of their own people. What follows is a report of Liam's visit:

From February 19 to 24, NDI, in partnership with the Reach organization in Bethlehem, conducted a series of informal meetings and roundtables in the Bethlehem area on promoting non-violent activism in conflict areas through building a community-based approach to social and economic development.

These meetings were facilitated by Liam Maskey, founder of InterComm, a grassroots inter-community organization in North Belfast that has aggressively tackled the social and economic deprivation that has characterized life in Northern Ireland while offering practical grassroots solutions to the difficult political issues affecting local communities.

The model of community development Maskey promotes is a comprehensive one in which every sector of society the private sector, NGOs, political parties and citizens has a responsibility to participate, cooperate and to contribute.

Through meetings and roundtables with the Reach organization, the political factions, community leaders and youth activists, and the business community, Maskey shared his own experience in promoting peace-building and non-violent activism through fostering his community's social and economic development. Relating both his own story and that of his community in its struggle for liberation, Maskey instilled a sense of optimism and hope for the future in those he met by sharing concrete ideas and strategies for bringing communities out of conflict that have worked successfully in North Belfast and could be applied, in part or in whole, in Bethlehem. Discussed in more detail later in this report, the sessions were informative, interactive and productive and, most importantly, resulted in agreement for a partnership and future cooperation between Reach and Maskey's organization in Belfast.

Background

NDI's partnership with the Reach organization is an outgrowth of the Institute's work in the Bethlehem Governorate since May 2002, in which the Institute has provided technical assistance and support to an ad hoc citizens committee, the Bethlehem Emergency Committee (BEC) that was established to deal with the social and economic crises facing the governorate of Bethlehem in the wake of successive military incursions. The BEC is comprised of community leaders from different sectors of society in the larger Bethlehem area. As a coordinating and advisory

committee, its role over the past several months has been to identify the needs of the Bethlehem community and to coordinate the international aid and assistance Bethlehem is receiving. NDI was intrigued to begin working with the BEC, not because of its emergency response mandate, but rather, because of its approach in bringing together different sectors of society to solve community problems.

In a meeting with the BEC in October 2002, one of the BEC members brought along an activist from a local NGO, Reach, who had previously been involved in militant activities to fight the occupation in Bethlehem, but was trying, along with his colleagues, to pursue a more constructive strategy in resisting the occupation. He and his colleagues founded the Reach organization in order to get their message out into the Bethlehem community at large, and gained the support of the local community by recruiting prominent members of society onto the organization's Board of Directors. The founder of Reach requested NDI assistance in identifying successful examples of non-violent activism and community development from other conflict areas in order to bring these examples to Bethlehem to further develop the idea of Preach and to build something positive in the Bethlehem community — something that would have the capacity to channel the energies of this group of young men to more constructive, and productive, ends.

As a result of this initial meeting, NDI began meeting regularly with the Reach Board of Directors to further develop the idea for a program that would facilitate this kind of exchange of experience and information. The suggestion of using the Northern Ireland example came from the members of Reach, who felt that there were parallels with the Northern Ireland experience from which they could benefit learning more about.

NDI was fortunate to identify Liam Maskey of the InterComm organization in North Belfast to participate in this program. An activist in the cause for Irish independence from the age of fourteen, Maskey began working to promote social and economic development in his own community when he believed that the strategy of armed resistance was setting back, rather than advancing, his country's cause for liberation. In Maskey's own words, the continuation of the armed struggle, rather than being associated with a just struggle for liberation, had, due to the British Government's control of media outlets, instead become synonymous with terrorism. It was at that point that Maskey began his work in promoting non-violence through strengthening and developing his own community.

Context

Like many other Palestinian cities and towns throughout the West Bank and Gaza, since the outbreak of the Intifada, or uprising, in September 2000, the Palestinian governorate of Bethlehem, located in the West Bank, has been facing a social and economic crisis. Tourism, the mainstay of the Bethlehem economy, has ground to a halt and unemployment is estimated at almost 70 percent. Successive military incursions, curfews, and the restriction of movement in and out of Bethlehem, have disrupted citizen's day-to-day lives and have contributed to a sense of perpetual anxiety and insecurity among the general population.

In this difficult and charged environment, internal tensions within the community of Bethlehem have been on the increase. Bethlehem is unique amongst Palestinian Governorates in that it is home to Muslims, Christians, refugees, strong family clans, villagers and urban dwellers. Societal and economic pressures, as well as the issue of what, exactly, is the most effective means of dealing with the occupation, have brought the underlying tensions and competing interests of different sectors of society to the fore.

Additionally, like in other Palestinian areas, there are groups of young men who are actively involved in armed resistance to the occupation. Whether Muslim or Christian, these fighters are frequently young men who are on the margins of society: uneducated in many cases, unemployed, and without strong family units. Until only a few months ago, one could see these young men, the Tanzim (Arabic for Organization), walking openly around Bethlehem for example, in front of the Church of the Nativity carrying guns. While they are no longer quite as bold in their actions, they are still active from time to time in the Bethlehem governorate, and continue to be a destabilizing force within the community at large. Recognizing that resistance by force is a losing proposition; Reach was founded with the support of the local community to help create opportunities for these young men, while working to strengthen the community in which they live.

The Program

In bringing Liam to Bethlehem to share his experience in promoting non-violent activism through community development, NDI and Reach were keen to reach out beyond Beit Sahour, where the Reach organization was founded, and into the larger Bethlehem community. With this in mind, four governorate-wide target groups were identified to participate in Liam's visit and to learn from his experience and that of Northern Ireland: the Reach Board of Directors, the political factions; the business community; community leaders and activists from the three refugee camps in the Bethlehem area; and youth activists from around the governorate. Informal meetings and roundtables with this wide cross-section of groups, as well as with other individuals, also enabled Liam and NDI to learn more about Bethlehem, the problems the area is facing, and current initiatives underway to tackle these problems.

As Liam told the different groups with which he met, breaking the cycle of violence and conflict in a community is more complicated than simply convincing people to lay down their arms. Peace building, rather, requires a practical approach of political, social and economic development whilst harnessing and re-directing the energies of those formerly engaged in armed resistance. It is thus about creating jobs and opening up a place for these individuals in society, to give them incentive and opportunity to change their strategy and to participate constructively in their communities as citizens working for a common cause.

Each session was tailored to the specific audience being addressed. For example, with the representatives of the political factions, Liam spoke about the importance of cooperation between the political parties and local NGOs in promoting community development and intra-community relations. Liam laid out his hopes and plans for North Belfast, whereby NGOs and local representatives from political parties would meet on a monthly basis to discuss community problems and issues, and what the

parties and NGOs are doing to address these issues. His intentions are that no more than five issues are put on the agenda at one time, in order to ensure a structured and productive meeting. The issues to be discussed in these meetings would be decided in advance by the NGOs in weekly NGO meetings. In return, the political parties would bring to the table prominent issues they believed the community should be addressing. Maskey is convinced that through this coordinated and structured approach, while important decisions can be addressed, a reality of empowerment and infrastructure will allow the community to greatly enhance their political, social, community and economic objectives.

In the meeting with the Chamber of Commerce and Bethlehem area businessmen, Maskey spoke about the organized efforts of community-based organizations and businesses to secure better guarantees and cooperation from local banks. Most of the local organizations and individuals in his community, he said, did all of their business through one local bank. The local bank, however, was not investing any money back into the community. Community organizations and businesses thus organized and, by working together, convinced the bank's ownership and management to lower interest rates for local organizations and businesses and to assist in the development of the local community.

Maskey also discussed the model of private sector & NGO partnerships used in North Belfast, where the NGOs partner with local businesses to learn the skills needed to run their non-profit community development programs more effectively. Maskey talked about the InterComm Housing Development project, which is now a self-sustaining project. InterComm gained ownership of abandoned houses in one of the most blighted areas of North Belfast and, through the investment of capital, renovated these houses, in the process creating jobs for unemployed and homes for those in need. The renovated homes were sold or are rented by InterComm, creating a source of revenue for the organization that is then re-invested in other community development initiatives. Such a project, he said, could only have succeeded through a successful learning partnership with the business community.

With the community leaders and activists from the Refugee Camps, Maskey addressed the importance of working to develop the community while simultaneously organising against occupation. Resistance, he said, takes on many forms, and one can participate in this struggle in a variety of ways. For leaders and activists from these overcrowded and poor areas, this was an important message, as many feel particularly young men that armed resistance is the only option.

Finally, in his meeting with youth activists from the greater Bethlehem area, Maskey helped educate participants about the situation in Northern Ireland, its parallels and differences with the Palestinian situation, and his own personal experience and that of his community in working for social and economic development and justice. These youth are part of a core group of activists involved in an ongoing program to promote non-violent activism through the Holy Land Trust Organization in Bethlehem, and are seeking to educate themselves in the norms of non-violent activism and to learn from the experiences of other societies in the midst of conflict transformation and resolution in order to apply these lessons to the Palestinian situation.

While each session varied, all of the sessions were interactive and participatory and emphasized the importance of the community working together for a structured, cooperative and integrated approach to promoting non-violent activism through community development. The scope of problems facing any community in a conflict environment necessitates the community coming together to work together, despite the difficulties involved in doing so. As Maskey said, the work he is now engaged in through InterComm has proven more difficult and challenging but has undoubtedly sown positive long-term benefits for the local community.

Results

As a result of the joint NDI/Reach program with Liam Maskey, Reach and InterComm, Maskey's organization in Belfast, have agreed on establishing a formal partnership for future cooperation. Liam has invited members of Reach, and other community organizations interested in learning about the InterComm model of community development, to Belfast to be placed in InterComm and other partner organizations for a period three weeks to learn more about how this model of community development works. The target date for this activity is mid-June 2003.

While in Bethlehem, Maskey was also able to make a connection between the Mayor of Belfast, Alec Maskey, who is the first Sinn Fein Mayor of the city, with the Mayor of Beit Sahour, Fuad Kokaly, and there is discussion of trying to develop a relationship between the two cities to promote future cooperation.

There was also discussion of concrete economic initiatives that could be undertaken between the two cities, in the form of an Irish-Palestinian trade fair in Belfast to promote Palestinian exports. The Chair of the Bethlehem Chamber of Commerce, Dr. Samir Hazboun, was extremely interested in promoting economic ties and in learning more about the InterComm model of private sector and NGO partnerships for economic development. He and other businessmen volunteered to find the necessary funds to promote this kind of study-exchange.

Following an individual meeting with the head of the Palestinian Prisoners' Club in Bethlehem, Maskey also volunteered to help establish contact between the Palestinians Prisoners' Club and their Belfast counterpart in order to help facilitate an exchange of information, strategy and experience between the two organizations. As the number of Palestinians detained without trial has increased dramatically over the course of the Intifada, the Prisoners' Club is playing an important role in trying to ensure that prisoners humanitarian and legal needs are being met.

Finally, Liam helped establish a relationship between Reach and the Municipality of Beit Sahour with the Irish Representation office in Ramallah. At the invitation of Liam and the Mayor of Beit Sahour, Irish Representative Niall Holihan joined us for a meeting and lunch on the last day of the program. Rather than focusing solely on the problems Bethlehem and Beit Sahour are facing under occupation, Reach took the opportunity to explain to Holihan what they were trying to do to address this situation. Holihan was extremely impressed with the commitment and vision of Reach and the idea of a partnership between the two organizations in Belfast and Bethlehem.

Conclusion

NDI can take credit, through the partnership with Reach, for facilitating Liam's trip to Palestine. At such a critical time it was Liam's commitment to promoting non-violence through community development, and the interest of the members of Reach in learning from other experiences that resulted in the development of a new partnership between the two organizations.

NDI has offered its services in the future as a resource to assist in Reach's development as well as with future networking and relationship building with InterComm.

Funding Peace Programmes

Andrea Gissdal

Introduction

Belfast is a city trying to move on from a past of violence and conflict. This is not an easy task when conflict has been a way of life for such a long time. It is a process that will take time and support. The more help and support given, the easier this process will be, but there are no quick solutions that can change the vast amount of time that needs to be allowed for healing.

This report has been produced intending to highlight issues arising from traditional funding procedures for peace work. The report is based on previous published media and interviews with peace workers in Belfast. Research has shown that while all funding is beneficial and even a necessity, many aspects of the procedures could be improved. During January and February of this year I interviewed a number of peace practitioners during which the following key issues were raised:-

- Short term funding
- Prescriptive criteria
- Naive Criteria
- Application Forms too sophisticated
- Lack of direct communication and slow response

Short Term Funding

A conflict that has been going on over 30 years will take at least as long to overcome. Funding for a 2-year project is good but will do little in terms of reaching the desired final outcome. Short term funding does not allow for valuable follow up, and further development, which is vital in order to run projects that make a difference. When the funding does come in such small doses with a time limit attached to it, a spend by date, peace workers find themselves spending too much time securing funding for new projects, keeping paperwork up to date, and other menial tasks that take them away from the work that needs to be done. It is understandable that funding bodies want to see evaluations and measurable objectives. Nonetheless, it means time spent away from the task at hand for the peace worker. Peace workers need longer term contracts to achieve their objectives. It has been said that when a peace worker is given a two-year contract, the first year needs to be spend building up contacts, gaining peoples confidence, and getting to know the area, while the second year they try to secure their jobs, and find funding to continue the work. The time scales imposed are felt to be unrealistic.

Prescriptive Criteria

It is felt that the criteria set for funding is not reflecting what is happening on the ground in the areas the work is targeting. Instead it is criteria determined by funders, based on concepts and ideas that might not be the most suitable for the areas. The peace process is an entirely new territory, and there is no tried and tested formula to work by. Flexibility and willingness on the funders part to consider a variety of

programmes and initiatives is therefore a must. It is understood that measurable programmes that follow a predetermined route are those in favour with funding bodies. However, monitoring the dynamics within the society and being able to adapt and adjust programmes accordingly in response would have more effect, than following the route predicted to be suitable months before. Interface areas in particular are unstable environments and situations can change quickly. When this happens the immediate needs of the people in these areas change, and so should the objectives of the peace worker.

It also appears to be difficult to find funding for single identity work, while it is generally accepted among peace workers that cross-community relations needs to be preceded by single identity work. Single identity work can be viewed as a preparation for constructive dialogue between the communities, and should not be ignored.

Naive Criteria

As European funding promises a temporary financial stability for peace work, Peace 2 is desirable for most, especially those that benefited from Peace 1. Peace 1 was awarded for capacity building, but those who still need more are now not eligible for peace 2, as the emphasis of objectives is on training and economic sustainability. However, it is naive to expect all groups to progress at the same speed. Those who have not reached a level where these new criteria can be met are in a real danger of being left behind, without the funds required to catch up. Another danger of this is that when the criteria are set to fund a specific type of work, groups who have been focusing their efforts on a different type of projects may change their aims to fit the new criteria. This leads to valuable work being lost and the skills and experience of these groups is not utilised. Nonetheless, Peace 1 and 2 have been very beneficial for strong groups, and their fears associated with this would be regarding what will happen after the 4 years of Peace 2 funding, when they are expected to be economically self sufficient.

Application Forms Too Sophisticated

While many community groups have the skills, the time and the ability to complete the appropriate application forms, there are still many who do not. It appears to be an accepted fact that the groups who have the least resources available are the ones who find it the hardest to secure funding. In addition, there are those who do not have the skills, time or support in place to successfully complete these forms, some which amount to over thirty pages. The Peace 2 application form was available on the Internet, which is good for administrative purposes no doubt, but can prove a real problem for some small community groups. Not all groups have access to the Internet, and even some that do may not be confident with the technology.

There are other options apart from Peace 2, but these award smaller amounts. Many groups apply to at least six other funders every year for the same type of work. That means six application forms, and six evaluation sheets, which in turn means a lot of time spent at the desk.

Lack of Direct Communication and Slow Response

This issue is directly linked to all other issues. Many groups would welcome an opportunity to meet funders and engage in a dialogue with them. The above issues could then be made apparent, and if not resolved, then at least explained. Many call for a partnership with the funders, wanting them more involved. They want constructive debate.

This would also help the speed of response. One interface project worker told me that he had submitted the application for Peace 2 funds 8 months ago and still had no reply from the IFB.

Peace workers would like to see more representatives from the funding bodies visiting groups in person, talking to them and informing them of the assistance they can get. Most feel the flow of information is one-sided.

Conclusion & Suggestions

All the above issues are linked. There is an overwhelming consensus that more resources are needed, both in terms of funding and in terms of people, and that funders need to be more involved to be aware of the needs on the ground. In doing so they would see the needs of the communities, and realise where flexibility is necessary.

One interviewee stated: Governmental agencies do not need to justify why they need resources. They just get it. However peace work needs to be justified. Why isn't funding and resources actively targeting this work?. This is something most seemed to agree with. Many mention the amount of money spent on the potential war in the Middle East, and question why so little is spent on dealing with the effects of war and conflict.

All of the practitioners interviewed said that they would like to see the local funders cooperate, and come together as one funding body with one application form and one evaluation form, to lessen the amount of time spent by community groups on paperwork.

Everybody agrees that longer time frames for projects and initiatives are essential to do the valuable work they could do, if given the time.

Peace II Experiences Or Addressing the legacy of Peace I

David Mc Combe

The following is a brief outline of the arduous, and somewhat confusing at times, application process for Peace II funding, obligatory to groups that had been successful in securing Gap Funding.

I discovered the process was anything but a simple one, and very distinct in nature from the relative simplicity of accessing EU Peace I money. The practical difficulties and financial red tape encountered could only be described as hindrances to what most community groups engaged in peace-building and cross-community dialogue projects desire to accomplish in addressing the legacy of the conflict.

I made an application on behalf of the Mediation Resource Centre, Carrickfergus, for the partnership project The Other View a magazine published by ExPac (Monaghan), LINC Resource Centre (North Belfast) and the Mediation Resource Centre (Carrickfergus). (The application process itself was a lengthy form-filling exercise with specific criteria to be met, in two parts, A and B and totalling 25 pages. After completion the application was sent electronically to the Intermediate Funding Body handling the specific cross-border measure under which the Centre was applying. The process took from October 2001 to February 2002 in view of the number of revisions and additional information required by the IFB).

Gap Funding concluded at the end of April 2002. I telephoned the IFB on the 25th April, and was verbally notified that the Project had been successful in its application. However, there was no indication given of when a letter of offer would be issued, nor indeed when actual money would be distributed to successful projects. That caused some concern. There were salaries to be paid starting in May 2002 and, as the publication was proceeding normally each quarter, printing and associated costs would have to be met. The last claim for Gap funding had been submitted, and the EU office in Omagh furnished a letter to satisfy the bank that an amount was due from the EU in June. The bank facilitated an overdraft on the strength of this letter and this covered the salaries and immediate costs for April and May. The Gap Funding residue was lodged into the bank on 26th June, covering the overdraft. (July salaries had to be borrowed from one of our project partners).

Note: At the time of writing this report, I have discovered that the majority of funded groups/projects have undergone the same multiplicity of experiences.

Meanwhile, our original IFB has passed over our application to another IFB to manage and administer. In due course a letter of offer was received dated 11th June. Before signature, however, a few points required clarification and amendment, and this caused further delay. Once more our bank was approached with a view to further overdraft facilities on the strength of the letter of offer. The bank arranged the overdraft facilities again, thus keeping the project going until actual money was received from the EU Special Programmes Body.

However, between the date of the issue of the letter of offer and actual receipt of money, I was busy making contact with various personnel in EU offices. The reason for this was that the IFB's were not holding the monies for distribution, as had been the case in Peace I. Only by trying to bring pressure to bear on the EU to give a release date for funds, and contacting agencies such as NICVA, (Mary Magowan), MLAs did I find that I was making some headway. (I have drawn the attention of MLAs to the fact that without ground-based groups and projects working within and across their communities, it would be very difficult to implement the Belfast Agreement, let alone the functions of an elected Assembly). There appeared to be such stringent rules and regulations in force that caused nothing but frustration. One of the compulsory criteria stipulations for receiving monies was the attendance at an Information Day at the IFB offices. Upon leaving I was handed a copy of a Manual from the Department of Finance and Personnel containing 408 pages of guidelines to follow with reference to accountability. And all this time the Project was operating on overdraft facilities, upon which arrangement fees and interest had to be paid by the Project. These were not operational costs to be met by EU funds, yet professional fees are permissible. I ask myself, what is a bank fee?

Eventually the first 30% of the Grant was lodged on the 28th August 2002. I soon made haste in paying overdue salaries, running costs, etc., and had this spent within one month of receipt. A visit from the IFB's Auditor to the Centre in Carrickfergus ensued, the purpose of which was to ensure that proper accountability was being practised. Everything proved satisfactory - one or two recommendations to be implemented. I completed the necessary return documentation (submitted from IFB by e-mail) for the expenditure the Project had incurred. This was the Project back on overdraft facilities for another two months until this claim was processed and paid into bank on 16th November 2002. I have since submitted further claims, one of which at the six-month interval had to be audited by the Project's auditors according to guidelines from the Department of Finance and Personnel's Manual.

At the moment the Project is coming to the halfway stage in its duration under current Peace II funding. In this first year there have been hiccups, due principally to IFB/EU changing established practices. For example, after accepting certain documented expenditure in the first six-months, disallowing the same documented expenditure in the following three month financial claim, thereby causing a lot of unneeded hassle. But I do believe that groups funded under Peace II have not found it any easier than this. Nor do I believe that the IFB's were fully informed or fully staffed to administer the procedures, and were perhaps a little like the groups they were going to fund in that they were also new to Peace II, and found the procedures quite different from Peace I.

If I had any recommendations or suggestions to make in relation to the implementation of Peace II, it would be to gear the process to become more flexible, especially in the financial field. Because application budget categories and amounts submitted over two years ago are liable to change, there is no need for the severity of adhering strictly to that submitted budget and causing more practical difficulties that can be done without in the life of community activists everywhere. Also, in the field of Monitoring and Evaluation and the collection of data, there is room for improvement. From my experience in attendance at workshops, whereby a lot of duplication is evidenced, I believe the task of projects reporting within certain

timeframes could be simplified, thereby freeing up valuable time to be better spent on actual project activities. Perhaps an overall format and guidelines for both financial returns and monitoring/ evaluation could be adopted by all the IFB's.