Networking for Peace

Editors: Christiane Kayser and Flaubert Djateng

Building Peace

Civil Peace Service (CPS) /
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and Cameroon

Building Peace

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Introduction

Networking for peace is a demanding topic that the CPS partners work on in their daily activities. The links between regions, between African countries and between the South and the North play a role that is just as important as the different topics covered.

In the situation our partners are experiencing this year, 2016, it is more important than ever, faced with the embittered conflicts in DRC, the terrorist threat and the marginalising of population groups in Cameroon, the stakes of the aftermath of Ebola in Sierra Leone and Liberia, to come together for more efficient, sustainable peace work.

That is why we asked our colleagues and partners to share their experiences and the challenges they meet. Already there are multiple and varied definitions of the concepts of network and networking. We decided to share with you some different approaches and definitions

This publication is intended as a tool for learning and exchanges on our practices and existing approaches.

In the first part of the publication, after an article on the context of the two concepts in our understanding and certain specificities of the CPS networks by Christiane Kayser, Anja Vollendorf and colleagues from the RIO network in DRC tell us about their experiences; Flaubert Djateng from the CPS mobile team explains the difference between network and networking and gives a few basic principles; Maurizio Guerrazzi, CPS coordinator of AGEH in Cameroon contributes with a personal reflection on his understanding of networking; then we have included the definitions and concepts of networking for peace expounded by Pax Christi International; whereafter the leader of the council of Churches in Sierra Leone, Ebun James DeKam, shares her definitions and understanding of networking; Dupleix Kuenzob from

World Dynamics of Young People (WDYP) presents an analysis of the CPS network in Cameroon; Alex Vojvoda describes networking experiences with the community media in Cameroon and has conducted an interview with the researcher Alison Gilchrist on the notion of community at the centre of the networks; Dupleix Kuenzob shares the experience of his organisation WDYP with networking and action research; Andreas Kahler and Paul Guy Hyomeni from the RECODH network in Cameroon give their understanding, as a network for defending Human rights, on the connections between networking and peace in an increasingly global world.

In the second part of the publication we chose to provide you with excerpts from an issue paper from the European Centre for Conflict Prevention developed by Willemijn Verkoren on working in a network for peace, which gives interesting theoretical bases to the different concepts and also speaks of the principal obstacles and ways of overcoming them. Our intention is to nurture a more in-depth discussion of the foundations of our approaches and strategies.

We hope you will find these contributions useful for the work you do on a daily basis. Any feedback will be most welcome.

Flaubert Djateng
Christiane Kayser
September 2016

Networking for peace: a learning experience

*By Christiane Kayser**

These past few years we have had a large number of discussions in the networks of the Civil Peace Service in Africa around the definition of networking. We are continually confronted with the challenge of defining whether or not we are a network, what the characteristics of our network are and of identifying who, in the end, decides on all of this.

At the same time, we have worked extensively on the concept of peace and tried to define it more precisely (in particular in this series of publications: Building peace). In short: peace, for us, is more than the absence of war, it grows from within and is built gradually in a non-violent way in order to become sustainable. Brief, targeted military interventions and actions may sometimes be unavoidable in certain acute situations, but they are never an adequate foundation for building peace.

We are also aware that peace cannot be built by a single group or organisation in isolation. We have to join alliances and form networks. An alliance is several players working together to achieve the same goal. A network is more flexible, open and sometimes sustainable. We must also distinguish between network and movement which — as, for example, the movements of young people in DRC and elsewhere — are based on a wide mobilisation of certain groups of people working towards the same aim. All these forms of cooperation are useful and necessary. We just have to identify what is the most useful for working on long-term change in a given situation and establish some basic principles.

* CSP mobile team for Africa, BfdW

The concept of networking has become very fashionable and at the same time often remains very vague. Behind this concept lie several forms of organisation which, moreover, have changed with the advent of the social networks, accessible to a multitude of people and the technical possibilities afforded by the modern media.

There are also greater possibilities today for working together in north-south, international and local networks, for enhanced effectiveness.

However, certain basic elements remain valid in relation to the usefulness or even the necessity of networking for peace:

- A network is all the more rich if the members are diverse and complement each other, they must nonetheless share some basic principles and at least a common goal.
- Being part of a network must necessarily provide benefits to the members beyond what they would find in their own work or through belonging to other networks. It is useful to analyse and define this regularly.
- As the obstacles to peace are local as well as global, it is essential to create connections at different levels. This necessarily leads to potential conflict and the question of power raises its head. Often the members from the North for example have greater tacit power than those from the South. But in truth they all have need of each other's complementary contributions so that the network can be efficient. The more we are aware of this, the better we can manage it.
- A network is also a learning space. Sharing and knowledge management are the key factors. Learning networks are often more effective in the long term than those that are focused solely on action.
- Joint action is important to foster ownership and build trust among the members.
- All networks, even the lightest and most flexible, need facilitation. The work of facilitation is all the more demanding as it is required to support the members of the network and at the same time boost them

and leave them free to take initiatives. Facilitation is also essential for bringing about and ensuring knowledge management.

- For actions and public statements the network sometimes requires coordination. Coordination is more organised and directive than facilitation which also potentially leads to power struggles and demands greater transparency.
- Networks need financial and human resources to be able to operate. This can often cause power imbalances and prevent members from developing ownership of their network. When this happens, the network can turn into a body being directed by the donor. It is essential to make financial influence visible and transparent to achieve a balance of forces and arrive at decisions that serve the whole network.

Networking for peace is related to the notion of community, to the work of governance, the struggle against injustice and human rights' violations, to the work of the media, to efforts deployed for development and humanitarian endeavours. It therefore touches on a great many varied topics and can be undertaken in different, flexible ways.

A common base is required nonetheless.

The case of the CPS networks

In the case of the Civil Peace Service networks in Africa this base is a common vision of peace for each country concerned, drawn up together by the participants. Subsequently added to this is a country strategy for the CPS drawn up with the people concerned. These networks have evolved with a high degree of complementarity and diversity. Actions (research-action, statements, advocacy, etc.) have been developed. They are learning networks because the annual meetings, other work and exchange platforms, publications and the website have an important place in the life of these networks. They are facilitated by the mobile support team and the national coordinators. Their

funding is provided by Bread for the World, Germany. These last two points mean that these are not open networks: you can only become a member if you are attached to the Civil Peace Service programme; facilitation and coordination are not governed by the members but by the donor. These limits originate from the history of the networks and are related to what is specific about them. They are a challenge and at the same time an opportunity. We must take them into account in the development of networks and make use of their potential together with the members. Many are simultaneously members of other national and international networks. Up till now the CPS networks have been seen by them as useful, and necessary for developing their peace work and especially the better to draw lessons from their experiences and face up to the challenges of peacebuilding. Such challenges are enormous in complex, acute conflict situations such as we have in DRC or Cameroon, or situations confronted with epidemics and their after-effects as in Sierra Leone and Liberia. We strongly encourage the members to continue to analyse the advantages (and possible disadvantages) they derive from the CPS networks and contribute actively to shaping the future of these networks.

As the mobile support team we are very attentive to exchanges between African countries and to South/North cooperation. In this sense we see our work as creating links between the various geographic areas and the different peace players. The changes over the past few years in the different countries have shown that more than ever we need to create opportunities for exchanges, reflection and learning that enable us to contemplate our daily routine with a degree of distance.

The networks are living bodies that evolve and — in the best scenario — invent and create innovation insofar as they provide breathing space and room to manoeuvre for all their members in their complementarity.

We hope to be able to make a contribution to this!

September 2016

The web and its connections

Experiences from South Kivu

Understanding networking in the Organisational Innovation Network RIO

*By Anja Vollendorf**

The Organisational Innovation Network (RIO in French) is a service of the Church of Christ in Congo (CCC) of South Kivu in Bukavu, DRC, the aim of which is to attain a stable, fair and peaceful society. To achieve this goal, RIO works in four domains: peace education, conflict transformation, good governance and organisational development. It is in relation to these domains that RIO engages in networking. Rio recently created the Regional Peace Centre (CRP) to intensify peacebuilding work.

The image of networking is marked by that of a web and its individual nodes, as Libwe Mufumbe Elisée, an agent of RIO, emphasises. All of the nodes connected together comprise the network. The nodes are the organisations and people who come together to make up the network. They have to know each other mutually. They engage in networking, as a result of which they work on the same topic in a given sector. A precise strategy is used for the purpose. There are certain shared values. "*We work together in synergy to achieve goals, which for us, of course, means peace*", adds Odile Bulabula, deputy coordinator of RIO.

The networking modules available on the Internet, which itself is a networking medium, promise a tool with which one can further a professional career, strike up strong partnerships, significantly improve

* CPS professional for BftW at RIO, Bukavu, DR Congo

a firm's turnover or achieve any other personal or professional goal.[1] Most of these modules have a very western, individualist vision.[2] This is very often related to business, to a capitalist idea. We often forget that networking is not only able to capitalise on strengths, but can also attenuate weaknesses.

Non-profit organisations also consider networking. The partners of the Civil Peace Service use the mechanism of networking because they want to achieve their objectives but ultimately by respecting the talents of individuals, whether strong or weak. If there was peace, it would be a good result of networking. Certainly, in the process, we are also concerned to make a profit, but our first thought, of the ideal profit, is peace. We share an ideal to be attained. We share working values such as reliability, mutual assistance, etc. But we must nonetheless control the specific profile of the different players. Didier Bimule proposes a mapping of the peace players which draws on variables such as: name, field of intervention, sphere of action, target group, etc. This is a good basis for the deliberations of an organisation that wishes to join a network after receiving answers to predefined questions.

"RIO is efficient thanks to the multiple networks it is a member of", says Placide Bwija. *"There are exchanges of experience, exchanges of working tools, exchanges of results."* And Lucie Lukogo Miruho lists activities such as meetings, appointments and training in view of the central question: *"How do you network?"* Her colleague Imani Bandibadhere adds that you first have to know each other, then make contact, then define the common goals of an activity and, after organising it, proceed to assess it and plan the next steps. RIO does this at every level; local, national, regional and international. *"RIO does not only work physically, but also by telephone, email, in writing, and through the social networks on the Internet"* insists Mahitaji wa Mulemera. In addition, there are different types of networks, some more formal, that is to say well-struc-

1 Cf. www.succes-prosperite.com/reseautage

2 Cf. also in the German context, Peer-Arne Boettcher, Die 10 Gebote des Networking, wie man Geschäftsfreunde gewinnt, Networking_Guide.pdf

tured, while others work in a more informal manner, on an as-needed basis. *"The members of a network work towards the same objectives, but the limits have to be clearly defined in time and space. Decision-making in a network depends on job function and membership. Networking facilitates exchanges of experience by attenuating the weaknesses of certain people to boost their strengths"*, emphasises Bavon Baheneka.

Saidi Alo-i-bya Sango speaks of two bases of networking. The first base is the geographic axis of the players who meet on the same terrain, where they are called upon to cooperate. This is always part of the reflection on how to organise, the better to serve the population. For, instance, who does what at Shabunda? How can we set up a network and with whom, to achieve what on the ground? The other base is the topical axis, that is to say, organisations working in the same field of intervention. They can assemble in a network for better coverage of the target and material and human resources, by asking the question: Who does what here?

It is important to know with whom RIO engages in a particular activity, for some partners are more appropriate than others. Odile Bulabula, deputy coordinator of RIO, reviews the situation on the organisation of a context analysis: *"If RIO does something, it identifies other players. We get together, if we have a similar philosophy. All the same, there have been cases where RIO believed it had the right partner, but unfortunately, it found out later it had made a mistake, for the partner in question lacked either capacity or will. Managing the competition is also part of the challenge. Sometimes, there are rumours caused by the pursuit of various interests, e.g. an organisation where there is over-representation of a tribe, presumed responsible for the rumours, reproaching the other of being Pro – Rwanda or "too" Pro-Congo or something else."*

However, the advantages of networking are predominant:

- An organisation gets to know others and is also known to the others;
- The organisation increases the chances of having enough capable and competent people to do good work. *"If we form a body, we are stronger, we strengthen ourselves and help each other"*;

- As each organisation has its limits, we have better visibility of these limits and can therefore improve our work. *"Strength lies in numbers"*;
- In addition, there is the idea of having so many structures in the environments RIO cannot work in;
- The organisation thrives on complementarities. We will have more impact in carrying out our activities if we seek out others to complement us. We all learn from each others' experiences;
- The organisation increases its own efficiency, e.g. sometimes we want to intervene in an environment where other organisations are welcomed more readily. This means we would be wise to advance with them. We take advantage of the talents of other organisations;
- Organisations pool ideas, they help focus efforts and resolve the problem together;
- Networking makes it possible to have a common vision. The work of peace building in Eastern Congo is only possible by means of a common vision in the region.

To illustrate the advantages, we can note a few examples:

RIO organised an International Symposium for Peace in Africa at Butembo from 26 February to 1 March 2001. This was the period of the rebellion. As a service of the Church of Christ in Congo, we spoke of peace and several international players took part. The utility of networking was evident in the way it raised the awareness of the international community and the country.

In the domain of advocacy there are situations it is impossible to remain silent about. We work together, for, through discussion, we have found ideas that are similar and from which recommendations can be drawn.

Other examples: RIO conducted advocacy in favour of natural resources within the scope of the RECOSO[3] programme. The Kinshasa government was made aware of the principles of responsible govern-

3 RECOSO: Reconstruction of social cohesion

ance to fight the exploitation and illegal exportation of resources. Alone we are not effective. We must integrate the States of the region. We must also involve influential people and organisations. Clarity is necessary when providing special support. RIO provided some mining operators with special support for advocacy. These were the economic interest pools of Fizi, Mwenga and Shabunda, supported up to national level.

As for the work in the mining sector, which was done by RIO and OGP (*Organisation Gouvernance et Paix*), it must be noted that there is a remarkable difference between a relatively stable network such as RIO, and OGP, and a haphazard network which is neither formalised nor stable. It takes time to set up a stable network. We can see this, for instance, in the project for monitoring the work of pregnant women in the mines. Which demonstrates the need to formalise the structures. The Coalition of Civil Society Organisations (COSOC) — regional centralisation to fight the illegal exploitation of minerals, for example, is in the process of formalising its structures: there is a general assembly, but no articles of association yet. However, there is efficiency: in 2014 research was conducted on the human rights violations in the mining sites. As the whole province could not be covered, the territories were divided up among the different organisations. Thus RIO worked in Fizi, Mwenga and Shabunda territories. On this basis, it was possible to identify cases of violations throughout the province of South-Kivu. For the sponsors, it was a success, and the organisations obtained funding from the network.

It should be noted that RIO has experience in working with numerous transregional partners: UMUSEKE in Rwanda, Pole Institute in North- Kivu, and the UNDP in the domain of education. And also in cooperation with players at local level where RIO works with the focal-points in the territories, e.g. in Fizi where access is often complicated.

An example of the increasing regional networking is the work with INTERPEACE, an NGO governed by Swiss law. INTERPEACE was looking for partners. First of all, it made contact with the organisations Never Again in Rwanda and CENAP in Burundi. Then, in a subsequent

phase, it sought to extend this network through the POLE-Institute, APC and RIO organisations in DRC. *"It contacted each organisation separately to check whether they could join the network. Then it launched the current programme"*, said Kimengele Uledi, the manager of the programme at RIO. *"The setting up of the Permanent Dialogue Group (PDG)4 is one of the results that have been achieved, which would not have been possible without networking."*

An example of networking at local level is the creation of the Intercommunity Coordination Frameworks (CCI) at Uvira, Bukavu and Fizi, resulting in awareness raising for the armed Congolese groups carrying out the disarmament of certain elements from time to time.

Particularly at Uvira and Fizi, RIO had the experience of working in synergism with ADEPAE. That is to say, we worked together almost as a unit, even though working in a network leaves a lot of room for manoeuvring. In any case, developing synergies can already be considered a result of networking. And sometimes the nature of the partners is extremely important. There was a case where RIO had worked in a network simultaneously with international NGOs and the Congolese government. *"When the population saw this combination of power illustrated by the presence of the representatives of the State and money through the presence of the international non-governmental organisations, it became content, open and very clear in its contributions"*, says Saidi Alo-i-bya Sango.

Also remarkable is the *"Alpha network"* of which RIO is a member representing the work of the Church of Christ in Congo (CCC). The network also comprises the Catholic and Baha'i programme. New modules are discussed there as well as the planning of activities on the ground. The members are attentive to the sphere of action to avoid

4 In the group, representatives from Bukavu (DRC), Kamembe (Rwanda) and Katumba (Burundi) were put together along with people from Cibitoke (Burundi), Bugarama (Rwanda) and Kamaniola (DRC). Unfortunately, the situation is tense since the violence in Burundi worsened, to the extent that contact with the representatives of Burundi was suspended.

duplication of actions and the dispersal of means that could hinder the work. Ideas are exchanged that can move the activities forward.

Networking is less profitable when specific objectives are not respected, when there are hidden agendas, or when behaviour does not comply with the predefined conduct guidelines; in a word, when the different behaviours inside the network are not focussed on the same goals. For example, organisations may claim ownership of the results without the necessary transparency. There may be a certain amount of egocentricity. Lack of agreements. Occasionally, suspicions. *"A certain Machiavellian spirit, if we may say"*, as Véronique Minyego puts it.

Interests may also diverge through external factors, when the network no longer meets needs or when the agenda is difficult to maintain, because the representatives are no longer available for meetings. This lack of availability may be due to geopolitical reasons (see Burundi), or an organisation's internal lack due to illness or the cancellation of an agent's contract.

Sometimes interpreting the legislation can be a real challenge. Sometimes, there are approaches that differ too much. Risks may be forgotten or given different values. In addition, given that female leadership has not been achieved at all levels under the principles of male-female equality and gender parity, the representatives of the networks in the respective levels are often men. However, there are specific women's networks. This is a potential that is often not used enough in networking. We could also consider the differences between men's and women's networking. Which works better? Where are the obstacles? [5]

Networking is sensitive to disturbances, for instance, if there are basic organisation structures whose members are volunteers, there are always problems of availability and quantity of activities. As soon as two organisations send agents into the field with different rates of pay, there may be some irritation as a result. At administrative level, it is sometimes difficult to come together, if there is a call for tenders

5 In Anglo-Saxon culture there is an analogy called the bucket of crabs sometimes used to describe female behaviour. Individual crabs trying to leave the bucket are pulled back in by the other crabs.

from a donor. Doing it together also means restricted budgets. And the withdrawal of a donor, of a financial partner, constitutes a blockage. In a word, sometimes an assessment is lacking: how can we improve our assembly?

In other words, we are attentive to all our partners. There has to be open-mindedness. We do not want to leave anyone out.[6] There are always new contacts. Most of RIO's contacts are with Europe, but it is also interested in Asia and in other African countries. A willingness to learn from one another facilitates the work to make change palpable. Networking is a preferential instrument for the implementation of several projects. Lastly, networking is an instrument that can change policy.

The RIO coordinator, professor Murhega Mashanda, sums up thus: "*The networks already set up are not yet sufficient. The structures are not yet able to identify their networking needs. This is why we intend to go, to try to help the structures organise themselves into networks. For example, in Uvira, the most important thing is for the partners in situ (the grassroots structures) to be buoyed by their communities, either by the members, or by the different layers. That is to say, to enjoy legitimacy. They have a power that originates from their 'base', from the grassroots of their respective societies. The work we do on networking with the other structures in Rwanda and Burundi has a direct impact on the political decision-makers. For the moment there is a process on the question of how to integrate peace education into the school curriculum. The politicians from Kinshasa only succeeded in this because we worked with networking partners. The work requires a commitment from all and continuous contact.*"

6 Cf. The "Dutch Admiral Paradigm" in sociology which refers to the practice of two young Dutch naval recruits who decided to give each other mutual praise and became the youngest admirals in the Dutch Navy. www.karrierebibel.de/netzwerken-richtig-lernen, p.2.

Networking: an approach for building peace

*By Flaubert Djateng**

The Civil Society Organisations (CSO), these "new" players in development projects, are also recognised as players in the peace process. They have recognised advantages compared to others; their presence on the ground, their knowledge of the players, the fact that they must take into account the "challenges of peace" to be able to do the work of developer, etc., makes them the potential builders of better harmony among the communities sharing the same living space. The CSOs who have invested in capacity building for their staff, also have forces, on a strategic and operational level, to develop and implement useful and effective work approaches.

The network and networking

It is important to make the distinction between the network and networking. The first is an institutional form and the second relates to a type of work, an approach that an individual CSO can adopt.

To be a network means operating in a pre-defined institutional form. A network is an organisation with a number of members spread out over a given area and with a management structure that takes into account the existence of a number of members and a presence in the different places. A network has a mission with forms of work that implicate all the members towards a specific interest. The formalised networks need a unit that propels them and the others follow. The coordination and monitoring body is the control centre with the leader at

* CPS mobile team Bread for the World

its head. The actions are conducted under its programming, the instruments and the tools are validated by it, the partners and other contacts are recommended or accepted by it; in a word, everything is done according to a designed and prescribed arrangement. All initiatives are supervised and require validation before being concretised in action. The private sector very often adopts this type of network as an organisational form, the network of *Les Brasseries du Cameroun*, the MTN telephone network, etc. Within civil society, structures adopt the name of network without becoming formalised, like CPS-DRC network, without the directive aspect of the approaches and decisions being taken into account.

Networking, on the other hand, is a kind of work, an approach adopted by a group of organisations or a single organisation to achieve a goal. Having chosen a mission such as the combat against corruption or peace building, one or more organisations, aware that they cannot achieve their goals on their own, adopt the networking method to involve other players in striving for the goal they fixed themselves. The particularity of networking is that the engine driving the players remains the goal to be achieved, the choice of means, tools and other instruments, the development of partnerships and alliance strategy remain flexible and are sometimes the initiative of individual players depending on their context and the specificities of their work environment.

Networking for peace

We are living in a world that changes so quickly on a political, economic and cultural level that, in order to build peace, we need to acquire new skills, knowledge and abilities rapidly to adapt to the different contexts of our work.

Organisations that have signed up to contribute to increasing peace in the relations between communities, who are seeking "harmonious living" between the people sharing a space, adopt networking as a work

method. In this way of doing things there are requirements for achieving success.

In the first instance, you must know what you want; that is to say, you need clear objectives with precise characteristics (places, time, allies, etc.). The members of the CPS in Cameroon set themselves three global objectives in their strategy. The first is related to the dialogue between the communities and peaceful cohabitation. According to them, to build peace in Cameroon, one of the objectives to be achieved would be that discussions between people from different ethnic backgrounds, regions and religions encourage peaceful cohabitation between ethnic and religious communities and between generations. To do so, they propose that in at least three regions of the country, the official stances of the various religious, traditional or regional leaders contribute to the peaceful resolution of potentially explosive conflicts; the civil society organisations and the churches of Cameroon cooperate around significant regional and ethnic topics concerning the relations between religious denominations within Cameroon civil society, prejudice about ethnic origins are analysed and constructive, inclusive stances are developed.

Starting from this objective, we understand that for the organisations of the CPS-Cameroon associated with Bread for the World, it is important to work on cross-cultural, inter-ethnic and inter-religious topics. The generation gap is also taken into account. Religious leaders, traditional chiefs and civil servants (in charge of regions) are the principal targets of the activities to be carried out in at least three regions of the country. The CPS country strategy gives more details on the indicators to measure this and other operational aspects.

In a networking process, when the goal is defined, the second step is strategic development. A strategy is required for launching the action. This means being clear on the activities, the roles and responsibilities, the message and the timelines. This also means, for the key players, answering the question: what are we going to do and what action should we take to further the cause we are defending? When this is

done, the next stage consists in determining the potential tools and instruments that could be used.

At this stage, it is important to draw attention to the theoretical concepts governing the activities of the CSOs. When you wish to bring about changes in the lives of people and institutions, you must be aware of the theories of change that exist. *"The theory of change can be defined as a conceptual model for achieving a collective vision. The theory of change connects the strategies, the outcomes/results and overall goals to be achieved. The theories of change may differ, however, they must be able to explain how to move from A to B"*.[1] Taking into account the theoretical aspects makes it possible to achieve more in-depth analyses with the value added of understanding the assumptions underlying the changes sought and offers the opportunity of developing one's own theory of change.

Within the framework of networking for peace, it is important to know that there are two levels of theories of change. The first is the global level, in the sector of policies and strategies, which defines how to obtain the changes in the various policies, laws and other strategies. The second level is tactical and operational, in relation with the ground and disciplines such as mediation, advocacy, social transformation, etc. At global level, it is important to remember that the theories of change are mutually exclusive, which means that we cannot work with two theories at this level; however, at the tactical level, we can have one or more theories guiding our activities and completing each other. For example, we can do some networking to produce an advocacy campaign and disseminate an innovation towards the people or influential structures ("Diffusion of Innovation" theory) and at the same time undertake action research at the level of the basic communities to have new tools for advocacy ("Grassroots" theory)[2].

1 Organizational Research Services. (2007). A guide to measuring advocacy and policy. Prepared for the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Seattle, WA.

2 PATHWAYS FOR CHANGE: 10 Theories to Inform Advocacy and Policy Change Efforts, Sarah Stachowiak, ORS Impact, October 2013.

When the goal is well defined, the possible tools for working identified, all this underpinned by one or more clear theories of change, then it is time to engage the process of mobilisation and awareness-raising of the other players (new or old) around the cause. The real work of networking commences and is achieved through meetings. These are moments when we share the conception of the programme, its vision, goals and objectives, the tools, the different theories, the alliance strategy, etc.

The strength of networking resides in the opportunity which is offered to the other players to contribute, either in refining the objectives, or in providing specifics in relation to their particular contexts, or by proposing new tools, etc., and in doing so they appropriate for themselves the goals and approaches.

Networking meetings are also places where we carry out in-depth analysis of the risks and how to bypass them, where coordination actions are defined, as well as monitoring and capitalisation operations. Each actor who participates in a networking meeting must come out with clear ideas on how to undertake their activities to achieve the desired goal. The question of means must also be emphasised and all the questions around the mobilisation of resources must be answered. The same goes for the capacity building processes and spaces.

It is necessary to point out the importance of clarifying the roles in a networking process. There are two types of roles, coordination & monitoring roles, and implementation roles. At the level of coordination and monitoring, it is a question of having an overview of the group dynamics, how the activities decided upon are executed, which players are making the fastest progress, who needs support, which activities are undertaken to valorise the achievements, the goal here being to make sure no-one constitutes a hindrance for the others.

An important moment of the networking workshop is agreeing on the targets of the action to be undertaken. There are direct target and indirect targets. *"The direct targets are the groups or individuals whose practices, habits or behaviour you want to change, in order to keep the*

peace"[3]. If we take up the objective of the CPS-Cameroon partners, the direct targets identified were the religious authorities, traditional chiefs and public authorities and civil society organisations. *"The indirect targets are constituted by groups or individuals who can influence the choices and priorities of your direct targets. It may be a question of the media, of public opinion, etc."*[4]. Given the often limited resources, it turns out to be very important to concentrate all the efforts on the individuals, groups or institutions that present the greatest capacities to introduce the required change. The identification of the target will help you to devise your strategic plan and choose the most appropriate methods or activities.

Networking does not stop at the regular meetings, it continues in the work places of the different members, who have the responsibility of deciding who to involve depending on the added value it will bring.

After the networking meeting, the activities decided upon must be started up, and so too must the jointly selected monitoring systems. Other networking meetings can take place with various themes: capacity building, monitoring, capitalisation, analyses of certain key factors, indicator monitoring, etc.

The work of networking respects certain principles, the most important of which is that the energy is to be found on the ground, with the peripheral players, the ones who work with the people and the structures within the communities.

The principles of networking

1. The energy (decision making and resources) must reside at the level of the individual organisations and not at the level of a superior management body (Coordination or Permanent Secretariat)

3 Manuel de formation pour des stratégies en matière de plaidoyer, Défense des Enfants International (DEI), Anna Volz, Geneva, March 2009, p. 29.

4 op, cit

2. The networking missions must not be in competition with those of ally or partner organisations
3. The missions or goals of networking must be beyond the capacities of an individual organisation and require more than one organisation to be accomplished (a single organisation would not be able to do it on their own)
4. Capacity building of the organisations involved in networking should take into account the individual capacities of the member organisations and also the institutional capacities of the organisation
5. The organisation that initiates the networking for a cause of any kind must make sure the roles of the allies and partners are complementary to the roles of coordination and monitoring
6. There has to be a clear limitation of powers between coordination and monitoring activities and the activities delivered by the partners and ally organisations
7. The ally or partner organisations nourish, each at their own level and in their respective areas, the mission transported by the dynamics of the networking.

To maintain the peace, networking makes it possible to take strengths and weaknesses into account and offer other players the possibility of contributing. It is also useful to know that during networking activities, the work done at the level of coordination must not be in competition with the work of the members of the network, but should ensure that the roles are complementary to each other.

Networking for peace

The importance of a happy ending

*By Maurizio Guerrazzi**

The topic of this publication "networking for peace" is a title that fired my imagination and in the course of my reflection my ideas were transformed. This clarifies for me one of the main characteristics of networking: the transformation of ideas. Effectively, transformation, in an antithetical way, is the most appropriate "form" of the network: a "shape" that transforms!

My awareness of this subject spread like clouds, forming images of different colours, allowing me to distinguish different aspects of the work: on the one hand the techniques, working tools, communication mechanisms, coloured cardboard, conference paper, brainstorming … and on the other common action strategies, experience sharing and also failures in the field of the interaction between individuals, between organisations, between visions, in the setting up of a celebration of international peace day, in research and analysis on young people and violence …. A list of activities that conform to this shape, networking, transformative!

To come back down to earth, let me present the country where I work, Cameroon. Here, around thirty civil society organisations work each in a specific domain, with, however, a common vision that accompanies them along the way. These organisations meet once a year as partners of the Civil Peace Service programme, with a common foundation and goal: preventive commitment for maintaining awareness and peace.

* Dr Maurizio Guerrazzi is the coordinator of the AGEH CPS programme in Cameroun

The conception of "peace" that they try to spread is moreover broader and deeper than just the opposite of "war". They are also allowed this through the pooling and exchange of their experiences from the four corners of the country. Strangely, as if it were all pre-established, history decided that the regions of Cameroon would take on the names of the cardinal points. The different members of the network come from the Far North, the South, the West and the East, as if they actually came from the four corners of the planet to discuss the future of this piece of the Earth they love so much.

The salient point about this network is that the members try to understand the point of view and experience of each other through their specific role; they so endeavour in their capacity as economists, sociologists, political scientists, journalists … and they act in the full awareness that in the group they are supposed to find strengths that complete each other.

Apart from the above one could use as the introduction of a manual on networking tools, personally I prefer, after a decade of experience in the domain, to think that the challenge of networking is related to people, completely linked to the person as a thinking and anticipating creature within the framework of their own material limits.

Being together, staying together, continuing the path together is effectively the major challenge, the one that could *transform*.

The challenges the members of the network can set themselves are those of calling oneself into question, calling into question pre-conceived ideas, prejudice, habits and individual or group lethargy. The challenge they can set themselves is to understand that we can show determination, will and the necessary commitment, the social courage of going beyond our own limits, the physical needs of individual and special recognition, to switch to a real state of common awareness, openness and transparency.

It is in developing a deep awareness of the difficulties related to acting, planning and discussing things together, that we can find the way towards discernment of reality and an effective and functional strat-

egy for social change. This is how we ourselves, members of a network, can become the models of this change, show how we can act, interact or even create together without suspicion and respecting differences. This goes hand in hand with the necessity of a personal commitment, intellectual dynamism and the necessary perseverance for working together in peace.

This is the challenge of networking, and why it is important to work at it and to devote energy to it.

It is the conscience of seeking harmony in the pooling of the work with others;

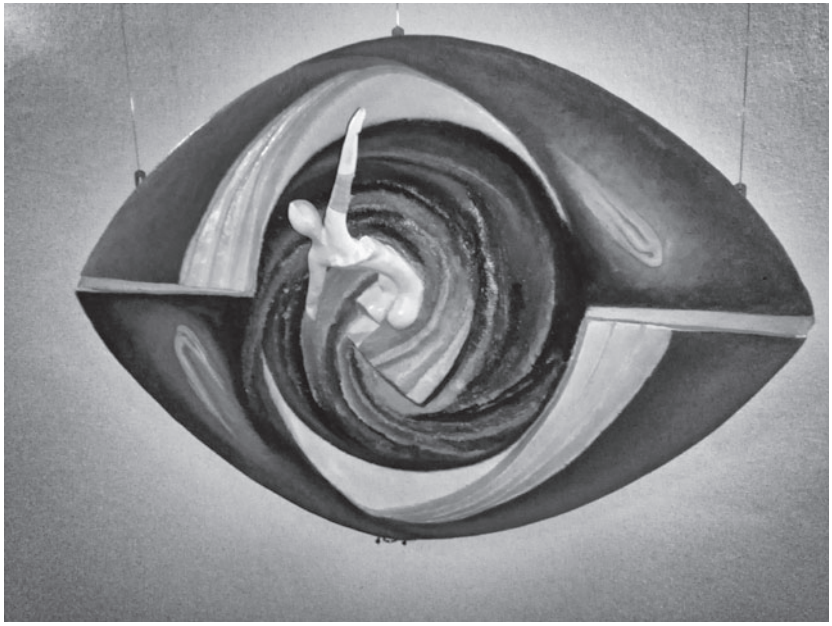
It is the individual commitment of seeking a relaxed climate of serenity in working with others and in the respect of the dignity of each and all;

The fact of putting forward our capacities to work with the local organisations — whether religious or of another, different essence — and remain united in a common commitment;

It is the personal discernment of the difficulties and differences, which shall not be lacking, and to be capable of seeing beyond appearances and struggling internally against our own biases in order to become true operators of peace and models for others.

Thus, the work in a network goes against the commoditisation of the human being and favours the respect of dignity. It resists and deplores the double social moral standards of rigid judgement and bipolarism (good on one side, evil on the other), which often leads the individual to schizophrenia. **Networking allows individuals to overcome a life obeying two storylines they are often obliged to follow.**

Lastly, I would like to add an incentive to not give up after having made the decision to work in a network, in case we find ourselves faced with a big problem in working with the other members. The end of a story is often so important it conditions the memory of the whole experience



Triumph of a Soul (Le triomphe d'une âme), by Ena'anga Amougou

we have lived through. This is also valid for an experience of working together in a network. I invite you to think about this idea and realise that a marvellous experience of networking can be undone during a stage of fatigue, a moment of lassitude during which we may decide to put aside the efforts made up till then. To avoid this, let us not be tempted by the desire to give up when faced with any kind of failure that arises during the work done jointly. **It is the harmonious resolution of problems, which turns out to be the real challenge of the network.**

An example of international and local networking for peace: how Pax Christi defines its work

Networking

Pax Christi International increases the capacity and effectiveness of the movement and global network. Frequent continental and regional gatherings play a key role in facilitating consultations and exchanges among Pax Christi Member Organisations around the world.

Simultaneously, along with economic globalisation, we are witnessing what we call a "globalisation from below," which is a crucial feature when "networking from below" for justice and peace.

Technological advances, such as the internet, allow international networks of people's movements and solidarity organisations to exchange information on issues and organise international advocacy campaigns in conjunction with many other multilateral players. Cooperative globalisation, rather than globalisation built on competition, is part and parcel of any networking for justice and peace. Networks will stimulate cooperation without neglecting the autonomy and self-determination of individual groups.

Expansion of Players

The community of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) has seen an enormous expansion, with the growth of NGOs, coalitions, campaigns and networks, both at the national and international level.

A healthy working relationship between the states and NGOs in an atmosphere of mutual respect and in joint coalitions and global networks is the only alternative in order to make progress on issues such as peace building and reconciliation in a globalised world.

Parnership and Collaboration

Almost all of our peace campaigning and networking is done in partnership with other groups. Sometimes it is relevant and appropriate that Pax Christi International acts on its own; however, increasingly, in order to be more effective, networking and collaboration, especially at the request of like-minded diplomats, is the only alternative.

We see collaboration as an essential part of peace building work and are pleased to play a facilitating role where we can. We operate in conjunction with peace organisations and peace networks on all continents.

We work with Churches to develop ecumenical thinking on reconciliation, dialogue, peace and justice, and with other Christian peace organisations to widen the profile of justice and peace issues of Churches in general.

Through networking, Pax Christi International also seeks to have a transforming influence, making religion an unequivocal force for peace and justice. It is Catholic in origin and tradition, and firmly committed to cooperation with other religious traditions and with all who share its values, principles and objectives.

We are linked with other agencies worldwide, sharing experiences and resources and working together on joint projects whenever possible.

The different networks and coalitions or campaigns, should have an impact not only on the international level, for instance at the United Nations or with the European Union, but should also be effective at the local, regional, and national levels.

In many cases, decision making begins from below, or from the national level. That is why many of Pax Christi's Member Organisations actively participate in local and national networks for peace.

Networking from Below

Networking for peace must include peace building from below, especially, but not exclusively, in conflict zones and in potential conflict areas. NGOs do recognise "local ownership" as essential for breaking cycles of violence.

Local networks and initiatives have the advantage of direct access to affected populations, knowledge of the local languages and conditions, and the ability to gain people's trust, for example: women's groups, inter-faith initiatives, local businesses striving for job creation, or the use of radio to counter disinformation or provide a forum for debate. Local strength and resilience should be supported.

Establishing groups committed to human rights, justice, indigenous self-determination, or sustainable development is not sufficient if these groups lack engagement with political structures. Community-based organisations and coalitions together with local governments need strategies to bridge gaps in responsibility and accountability.

This can be done by identifying a consensus on needs, tasks, roles, and establishing forums and networks where government representatives and the community can listen to each other.

A more integrated "up and down" approach is needed to bring all stakeholders—men, women, elders, youth, traditional and official leadership, religious representatives, and the government together for an integrated impact and change.

Networking for peace is a very demanding but essential way forward to effectively contributing towards peace, justice, and reconciliation through globalised solidarity.

Source: http://www.paxchristi.net/engl/networking

Building peace: How does it differ from development work or humanitarian approaches and what role does networking play?

*By Ebun James DeKam**

Let me begin by confessing I used the internet for putting this article together; Wikipedia and OCHA and several articles of Professors from various institutions were helpful. After reviewing the question or title (at the top of the page) that I selected to respond to, I think it's helpful to look at some definitions that seem reasonable to me i.e. Development Work, Humanitarian Approaches and Networking.

1. Development work ...

… is a system-wide manifestation of the way that people, firms, technologies and institutions *interact with each other* (genuine participation at all levels, consultation, coordination etc.) within the economic, social and political system that *builds the capacities* of the people, firms, technologies and institutions to *sustainably address* quality of life issues for the population it serves. The sustainability factor must account and allow for significant adaptation to key factors and interests of the economic, social and political system encompassing the population.

2. Humanitarian Approaches

For the purposes of this brief paper, I would like to posit that humanitarianism is concerned with human welfare and the alleviation of suffering; humanitarian approaches then would be the harnessing of sys-

* General Secretary of the Council of Churches in Sierra Leone (CCSSL)

tems, processes and approaches that address human welfare (quality of life issues i.e. protection of human rights, equal access to medical facilities, education, economic participation etc.) and human suffering.

There is no one standard or legal definition of humanitarian intervention; there is, however, a general consensus on some of its essential characteristics:

1. Humanitarian intervention often involves the threat and use of military forces as a central feature and entails interfering in the internal affairs of a state by sending military forces into the territory or airspace of a sovereign state that has not committed an act of aggression against another state.
2. The intervention is in response to situations that do not necessarily pose direct threats to states' strategic interests, but instead is motivated by humanitarian objectives.
3. Preferably humanitarian intervention should be understood to encompass … non-forcible methods, namely intervention undertaken without military force *to alleviate mass human suffering within sovereign borders.*

Legal Grounds for Humanitarian Intervention

Humanitarian intervention is a concept that can allow the use of force in a situation when the UN Security Council cannot pass a resolution under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations due to veto by a permanent member. The United Nations has also continuously been involved with issues related to humanitarian intervention, with the UN intervening in an increased number of conflicts within the borders of nations. Potential and relatively recent examples of previous humanitarian interventions are found in *Appendix A*.

In 2005, a major reform of humanitarian coordination, known as the Humanitarian Reform Agenda, introduced a number of new elements to enhance predictability, accountability and partnership. The Cluster Approach was one of these new elements.

Clusters are groups of humanitarian organizations, both UN and non-UN, in each of the main sectors of humanitarian action, e.g. water, health and logistics. They are designated by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and have clear responsibilities for coordination (UN OCHA). *See Appendix B.*

When emergencies occur coordination is necessary. Good coordination means less gaps and overlaps in the assistance delivered by humanitarian organizations.

The Cluster Approach was applied for the first time following the 2005 earthquake in Pakistan. Nine clusters were established within 24 hours of the earthquake. Since then two evaluations on the Cluster Approach have taken place. The first, finalized in 2007, focused on implementation. The second, conducted in 2010, focused on the outcome of the cluster approach in improving humanitarian assistance. The learning from these evaluations led to the IASC Transformative Agenda (TA), a series of actions aimed at simplifying processes and outcomes.

The IASC Principals "agreed there is a need to restate and return to the original purpose of clusters, refocusing them on strategic and operational gaps analysis, planning, assessment and results". The aim of the cluster approach is to strengthen system-wide preparedness and technical capacity to respond to humanitarian emergencies, and provide clear leadership and accountability in the main areas of humanitarian response. At country level, it aims to strengthen partnerships, and the predictability and accountability of international humanitarian action, by improving prioritization and clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of humanitarian organizations.

Criticism of Humanitarian Intervention

Many criticisms have been levied against humanitarian intervention. The most objective criticism of humanitarian interventions come from civil society perspectives, especially those shaped by independent scholars who benefit from academic freedom, rather than the actual "actors" or implementers.

Some argue that humanitarian intervention is a modern manifestation of the Western colonialism of the 19th century i.e. a capitalist set of constraints is imposed on a broken society that impairs its right of self-determination and prevents its leadership from adopting an approach to development that benefits the people of the country rather than makes foreign investors happy.

Others argue that dominant countries, especially the United States and its coalition partners, are using humanitarian pretexts to pursue otherwise unacceptable geopolitical goals and to evade the non-intervention norm and legal prohibitions on the use of international force.

A third type of criticism centers on the event-based and inconsistent nature of most policies on humanitarian intervention. These critics argue that there is a tendency for the concept to be invoked in the heat of action, giving the appearance of propriety for Western television viewers, but that it neglects the conflicts that are forgotten by the media or occur based on chronic distresses rather than sudden crises. Henry Kissinger, for example, finds that Bill Clinton's practice of humanitarian intervention was wildly inconsistent. The US launched two military campaigns against Serbia while ignoring more widespread slaughter in Rwanda, justifying the Russian assault on Chechnya, and welcoming to the United States the second-ranking military official of a widely recognized severe human rights violator — the communist government of North Korea. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humanitarian_intervention#cite_note-40)

Humanitarian intervention has historically consisted of actions directed by Northern states within the internal affairs of Southern states,

and has also led to criticism from many non-Western states. The norm of non-intervention and the primacy of sovereign equality are still cherished by the vast majority of states, which see in the new Western dispensation not a growing awareness of human rights, but a regression to the selective adherence to sovereignty of the pre–UN Charter world. During the G-77 summit, which brought together 133 nation-states, the "so-called right of humanitarian intervention" claimed by powerful states was condemned. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humanitarian_intervention#cite_note-42)

3. Networking

Networking is defined as the building or forming of beneficial social connections or social relationships among people who share similar interests, activities, backgrounds; across geographical and philosophical, economic or political boundaries. It is the art or the act of making contact and exchanging information with other people, groups and institutions to develop mutually beneficial relationships allowing you to access data, information, people, skills and services.

Examples of networking might be:

1. Handing out your business card in a social event thereby extending and expanding your access to others and others access to you.
2. Exchanging contact information with people and organizations who have interests in similar areas.
3. Sharing and acquiring information between different divisions of the same company to share information and solve business problems.

Networking has only one downside — there may be a temporary information overload that results in a misapplication or underuse of the benefits gained but that can be managed with intentional cataloguing of information before additional "information" is gathered.

4. Peacebuilding

Building the peace or "peace building" is an intervention designed to prevent the start or resumption of violent conflict by creating a sustainable peace. Peacebuilding activities address the root causes or potential causes of violence, creating a societal expectation for peaceful conflict resolution and stabilization of society politically and socioeconomically and ensure civilians have freedom from fear (negative peace), freedom from want (positive peace) and freedom from humiliation before, during, and after violent conflict.

Successful peace building activities create an environment supportive of self-sustaining durable peace i.e. reconciling opponents, preventing conflict from restarting, engaging civil society, creating rule of law mechanisms and addressing underlying structural and societal issues that results in general human security. Researchers and practitioners also increasingly find that peace building is most effective and durable when it relies upon local conceptions of peace and the underlying dynamics which foster or enable conflict *("Understanding Peacebuilding as Essentially Local". Stability: International Journal of Security and Development.)*

There are two broad approaches to peace building.

1. Peace building can refer to addressing the factors driving or mitigating conflict (reducing structural or direct violence).
2. Peace building can also refer to efforts to coordinate a multi-level, multi-sectoral strategy, including ensuring that there is funding and proper communication and coordination mechanisms between humanitarian assistance, development, governance, security, justice and other sectors. In this sense peace building is an overarching concept useful for describing a range of interrelated efforts.

As seen from the above, the "quality of life issues" are a common thread between development work and humanitarian intervention as well as

peace building. Increasingly there is the expectation and even demand that both show credible evidence of employing a "rights based approach" when carried out. To be effective, both require coordination and collaboration of the "actors" or stakeholders (including the rights holders and rights bearers), monitoring, assessment and evaluation. Development work, humanitarian initiatives and peace building require effective coordination and collaboration and therefore require extensive networking action to bring about the desired outcome i.e. appropriate use of financial & material resources for maximum impact and improvement in the quality of life of the target population at the Community, Local, National or Regional Level (safety, security, experiencing full range of human rights etc). Humanitarian approaches most often deal with the alleviation of suffering and should lead to the development process; development work is focused more on building of human and institutional capacities that address quality of life issues and the prevention of human suffering. Peace building promotes an environment where development and humanitarian activities complement and supplement each other thus laying the foundation for an ever strengthened productive and sustainable society.

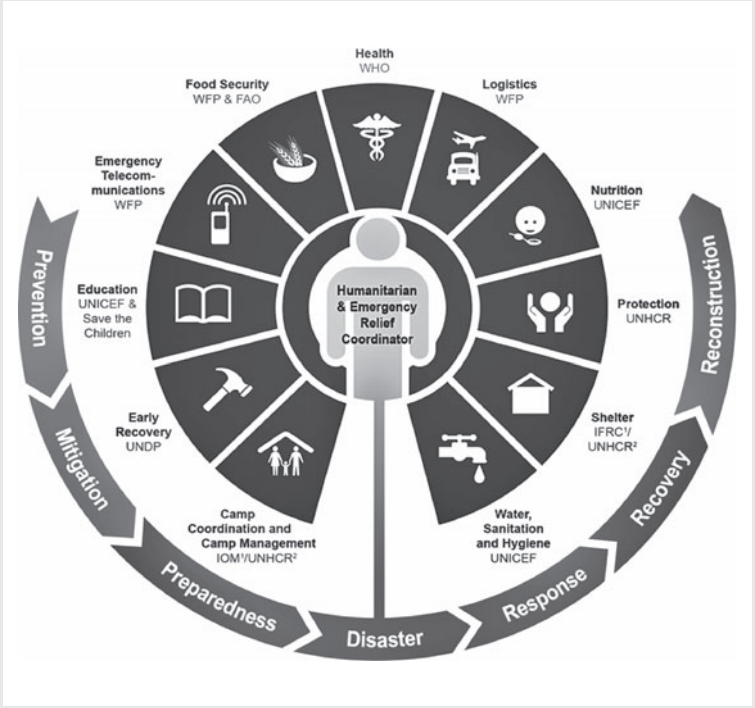
Appendix A

Potential and relatively recent examples of previous humanitarian interventions

- US intervention in Dominican Republic (1965)
- Indian intervention in East Pakistan (1971)
- Vietnamese Intervention in Cambodia (1978)
- Uganda-Tanzania War (1979)
- Operation Provide Comfort (Iraq, 1991)
- Unified Task Force (Somalia, 1992)
- Operation Uphold Democracy (Haiti, 1994)
- UNAMIR (Rwanda, 1994)
- UNTAET (East Timor, 1999)
- NATO bombing of Yugoslavia (1999)
- British military intervention in the Sierra Leone Civil War (2000)
- Coalition military intervention in Libya (2011)
- Military intervention against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (2014-present)

Appendix B

Clusters of Humanitarian Organizations per Sector of Response



Appendix C

Pre-violent Conflict Peace Building and Post Conflict Peace Building

In pre-violent conflict situations, peace building efforts may include the following:

1. Diplomatic initiatives,
2. Economic development,
3. Social, educational, health, legal and security sector reform programs, addressing potential and root causes or sources of instability and violence.
4. Initiatives to change beliefs, attitudes and behaviors aimed at transforming the short and long term dynamics between individuals and groups that when transformed promote a more stable, peaceful coexistence.

In Post-conflict situations peace building is often broken into 3 dimensions as shown below.

1st Dimension

1. Taking away weapons
2. Re-integrating former combatants into civilian society

2nd Dimension

1. Rebuilding basic facilities, transportation and communication networks, utilities
2. Developing "rule of law" systems and public administration
3. Building educational and health infrastructure
4. Providing technical and capacity-building assistance for institutions
5. Creating legitimate (democratic, accountable) state institutions

3rd Dimension

1. Trauma counseling
2. Transitional justice and restoration
3. Community dialogue
4. Building bridges between different communities
5. Increasing human rights
6. Gender empowerment
7. Raising environmental awareness
8. Promoting economic development
9. Developing a civil society and private sector that can represent diverse interests and challenge the state peacefully

A mixture of locally and internationally focused components is key to building a long-term sustainable peace. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peacebuilding#cite_note-Peacebuilding-12; -17) Mac Ginty says that while different "indigenous" communities utilize different conflict resolution techniques, most of them share the common characteristics described in the table. Since indigenous peace building practices arise from local communities, they are tailored to local context and culture in a way that generalized international peace building approaches are not. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peacebuilding#cite_note-18)

Local, customary and traditional

1. Respected local figures
2. Inclusive – public dimension
3. Storytelling and airing of grievances
4. Emphasis on relationships
5. Reliance on local resources

International

1. Top-down: engages with national elites, not locals
2. Exclusive: deals are made behind closed doors
3. Technocratic/a historical basis: emphasis on 'striking a deal', 'moving on'
4. Modeled on corporate culture: reaching a deal, meeting deadlines prioritized over relations
5. Relies on external personnel, ideas and material resources

Networking and building on the achievements of the Civil Peace Service (CPS) Programme in Cameroon

*By Dupleix F. Kuenzob**

Networking is an integral part of the global strategy of the Civil Peace Service (CPS) programme that sends professionals to partner organisations all over the world with the aim of stemming violence without employing military means and supporting the commitment of civil society to resolve conflicts peacefully. To support projects aimed at non-violent conflict resolution in various countries worldwide, a number of development and peace organisations have joined up to form the Civil Peace Service Consortium. This consortium is a joint initiative that is particularly interesting as it includes non-governmental as well as governmental agencies thanks to funding from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The interventions of the stakeholders regarding the implementation of the CPS programme at the level of the countries which favourably welcomed this initiative should take place in the light of this networking strategy.

Our presentation on **networking and building on the achievements of the CPS programme in Cameroon,** is intended to help the organisations, associations and other entities taking part in this programme, to take ownership of the concept, with further clarification of its applicability in the country context, in order to optimise the recourse made to such a strategy to meet the objectives of the CPS programme, without a feeling of merging or confusion of the identities, missions and skills

* Executive Secretary, World Dynamics of Young People (WDYP), Cameroon

specific to the members who are a part of it, but rather with the legitimate ambition of federating them in an approach based on complementarity.

1. Tentative definition of networking and positioning of the CPS

To begin with, networking can be understood as a set of activities the aim of which is to multiply professional contacts. For instance we speak of business networking to designate a transaction or negotiation method based on the theory of networks creating possibilities for exchanges or gifts between professionals. Another sense acknowledges that social networking has existed since people began to organise themselves in societies. This sense relies on the existence of social groups, organised around a unifying theme (religion, social class, studies, etc.), that form a type of informal networking. These two perspectives inform us about a living reality: that of a multiplicity of forms and possibilities of networking. Without going into the typology of "networking", we are pleased to note that it differs from "network" which refers to a harder, static or fixed reality, in the sense that networking is essentially dynamic and expresses the movement whereas network seems to express the positions or channels.

Social networking in particular has considerably developed and grown with the advent of the Internet which gave rise to a number of social networks.

Networking or working in a network as applied within the CPS programme lies at the crossroads of business networking and social networking. The strategic deployment of the CPS is similar to business networking as it gives the possibility of contacts between the players working for peace in Cameroon. From this angle, the exchanges are based on the sharing of experience, best practices of course, approaches and methods, results, successes and failures and to a certain extent tools, an aspect which is still to be developed. This professional logic is

restrictive as the exchanges are not geared towards satisfying only the members, but society, since the CPS Cameroon programme has a single common goal of keeping the peace or creating positive peace.

This common goal can lead to saying that the CPS participates in social networking since one of the dimensions of peace happens to be the creation and construction of relations through communication and dialogue between the active members of a society or a community. This logic is reductive in so far as the communications carried out do not stop at the members and do not have an impact merely on their lives, but are much more open up to a wider spectrum of impacts.

Incidentally, the fact that each participant has a different identity and missions from those of the other members, but all work towards achieving the same social goal, challenges us on the form of networking the CPS programme must foster. It is a question of **influence networking,** no more and no less. In this respect, we define the network as a set of physical or moral persons working together towards a common goal. The advocacy networks shall therefore be groups of organisations and people working together to obtain changes in policies, laws or programmes concerning a specific theme. The action of the CPS is fundamental to tackling not only the effects of the problems that hinder peace (which is most often done individually by each organisation), but to go deeper into these problems by tackling their roots or causes (which is the reason behind the existence of advocacy). The work of the organisations taking part in the programme must therefore necessarily be completed for the mission of civil society, which is the struggle against the causes of the ills, to be satisfactorily accomplished.

2. The requirements of influence networking

We previously said that transactions benefiting only the members were insufficient for justifying the progress towards the goal of peace. Similarly, we said it was insufficient to communicate mutually within a

closed group and achieve this objective of peace. Convinced in addition that the CPS Programme is part of a logic of advocacy and influence, the networking practiced, to be effective, requires *inter alia*:

a. **working together.** This requirements calls for building, at a local level, where one or more member organisations are based, the credibility of the strategies to be developed vis-à-vis the local authorities, on the participation of all these members and the involvement of the other players including the development of alliances with other groups;

b. **cooperation**. This requirement would mean that at a level greater than local level (departmental or regional) where the member is based, the credibility of the strategies towards the authorities and services relies on the participation and involvement of the members and other players at this other level.

c. **collaboration**. This requirement calls upon the national level for the same constraints as previously.

d. **joint efforts**. This requirement calls upon the involvement and participation of the international players on which the credibility of the strategies should rely.

The members of the CPS Cameroon programme must be aware of these requirements each time it is a question of intervening on a specific problem. However, the strict application of all these requirements does not always guarantee the success of the approach or of the action, or even the meeting of the initial objectives. From experience, the convergence of certain interest groups, communities, people and organisations with a common goal has failed, calling into question the objective they were set up to achieve. There are several possible reasons behind these failures.

3. Possible causes of failures in networking

When networking is implemented, special attention must be given to aspects concerning the skills, techniques and knowledge related to management of networks and alliances. Any inadequacies or deficits in relation to one of these aspects may lead to a failure of the work.

Disagreements between members about questions of management and operation, including the governance bodies, leadership, the assigning of roles and responsibilities, can lead to the weakening and even dissolution of well-constituted coalitions and networks. This is where the CPS programme enjoys a major advantage: that of the informal nature of the network formed because it is a network without a rigid governance structure, but rather a programmatic orientation that is being structured. This situation makes the networking more flexible even if it may be reproached with the difficulty of monitoring and measuring the cumulative impact of the work accomplished that is attributable to the interventions of the programme.

At the current stage of implementation of the CPS programme in Cameroon, a certain number of achievements can be claimed and allow us to affirm that networking has a bright future if we know how to better apply the aforementioned requirements and especially overcome the causes of failure described above.

4. The achievements of the CPS programme in Cameroon

The achievements of the CPS programme in Cameroon, if they are well exploited and consolidated, can serve as keys for the success of the advocacy to be undertaken. We may mention:

i. **Religious and cultural diversity of the members taking part in the programme**. Lay and denominational players all interacting. The

Christian and Muslim faith communities mingle and discuss the social problems concerning the country and the population.

ii. **Geographic coverage**. With the exception of the regions of the South and Adamaoua, all the other regions in Cameroon are stakeholders in networking. If we consider the zones of intervention, all the regions of Cameroon are covered by members participating in networking.

iii. **Diversity of themes**. The current participants in networking cover a number of different themes which take place cumulatively in the dimensions of peace targeted by the programme. Economic and social justice, governance, citizenship, the environment, spiritual questions, etc.

iv. **Priming the effectiveness of networking requirements**. Workshops earlier in the programme helped to identify the problem issues to be given priority on which certain members got together. We may mention, for instance the question of the enlistment of young people in armed groups. This initiative, which began with concerted work in terms of defining a tool for collecting data (questionnaire), expanded into an action research project. This action research was initiated under the leadership of the World Dynamics of Young People (WDYP), involving three members of the CPS programme in the Centre, West and Far North regions who cooperated on its implementation. It took advantage of the cooperation from an organisation external to the CPS on the one hand, and the mobile support team on the other. With the funding provided by Bread for the World and Foundation Friedrich Ebert, the requirement of working together was fulfilled. For the next stages, it will be more a question of reinforcing the application of the networking requirements by involving various other players and targeting the authorities who are the audiences of the work to be accomplished.

This experience is not unique. The Department of the Union of Christian Women (DUFC) of the Evangelical Church of Cameroon (ECC) jointly organised a workshop for the people in charge of the parishes within that movement. This intervention was perfectly aligned with the application of the achievements of the meeting of the CPS partners organised in January 2015 in Berlin, Germany. Another joint action is envisaged in June 2015, this time regarding the restitution strictly speaking of the meeting of the partners of the CPS programme.

These few examples adequately show that networking, within the framework of the CPS programme, is being consolidated. Now it remains to be extended to all of the players to make the programme more visible. For in fact, the direct consequences of networking must be expressed in terms of permanent visibility, public audience and positive impacts of the CPS programme as specified from the perspective of the future of the programme as follows: ''*the relations between the members of the CPS network are being consolidated and the work of peace building is better perceived by the various parties. The work within the framework of the CPS gains in legibility, sending in a peace worker is no longer perceived as the goal of the collaboration as part of the programme, but as a means to promote a transformation of the living conditions of the population for more peace. The network is taking shape, we must make it more operational, etc.*"

In conclusion, I would acknowledge that networking is maturing within the CPS programme in Cameroon. Several pillars of success of networking are assembled and the status of the members represent undeniable assets. All this constitutes the basis for strategic communication in advocacy, so that at the appropriate moment, the synergism of action and the complementarity in the interventions make the voices of the programme heard among the audiences to be influenced. However, this does not happen automatically. It is important to train members on the building of alliances and the value of working in a network in terms of having an impact for peace.

Community media networks in the South West Region in Cameroon

*By Alexander Vojvoda**

"For communities, leadership appears in many different ways, and is not always expressed overtly or through obvious or traditional roles. Community leadership may evolve through the strength of inter-personal relationships and the nature of regular interactions across networks at a micro-level, creating an informal power base and networks of influence."

Alison Gilchrist[1]

1. Computer Software on Radio?

In 1983 in the former Republic of Yugoslavia tech and DIY[2] enthusiast Voja Antonić designed a cheap and home-assembled personal computer called *Galaksija*, which happened to become a great success with over 8,000 pieces sold.

The design of the *Galaksija* was a reaction to the restrictive import regulations in Yugoslavia which prevented imports exceeding a value of 1.500 Dinars (approximately €70) and thereby limited the tech-affine community's growing demand for computers and other tech-gadgets in the socialist country in the late-1970s and early-1980s.[3]

1 Gilchrist, A. (2016), p. 47

2 DIY = Do It Yourself

3 P2P Foundation (2016), "Voja Antonić" in Wikipedia (2016), "Galaksija" in Wikipedia (2016)

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One specific feature of the *Galaksija* attracted the attention of radio host Zoran Modli: Instead of the usual hard drives the *Galaksija* used normal audiocassettes to store data. In the early 1980s Disk Jockey and radio presenter Zoran Modli hosted a popular radio show on the radio station *Beograd 202* called *Ventilator 202*. The show was dedicated to contemporary music, culture and art, but also discussed new developments in the computer and technology scene in Yugoslavia.

Antonić and Modli decided to use the radio show to broadcast software, applications and games for the *Galaksija* to serve the growing fan base of the *Galaksija*. During dedicated *Galaksija* radio programmes Zoran Modli announced the type, name and details of the software to be broadcasted and then the peeps, sounds and klick-klacks followed which were recorded by already impatiently waiting *Galaksija* owners. After recording the software on their cassette tapes, listeners could use the games or applications on their computers at home.

The radio show *Ventilator 202* thus accommodated a specific need and demand of the *Galaksija* community but also operated as an exchange platform where software was specifically programmed for Modli's show and served the newly developing tech and programming scene in Yugoslavia. Without this radio show some of the software and games for the *Galaksija* would not have become so popular or maybe would not have even been programmed.[4]

The *Galaksija* example and the distribution of software via the radio programme *Ventilator 202* showcase that community-oriented media can operate as network node, hub and exchange platform and in some cases develop creative ways to solve a problem and support the interests and needs of a community. The community media thereby establish connections between members of a community or even beyond community boundaries. These connections would not have existed without the intervention and involvement of media activists and the use of the radio station's infrastructure.

4 P2P Foundation (2016), "Ventilator 202" in Wikipedia (2016), "Zoran Modli" in Wikipedia (2016)

This article seeks to discuss the potentials of rethinking community media as part or hub of a network in civil society which can be an active part for efforts of peace building, conflict transformation and community development. Through a theoretical exploration of the term *community media* as platforms for, from and by the community, as part of civil society and place for alternative opinions to a network hub in civil society, I will discuss a currently forming community network in the South West Region in Cameroon.

2. From Serving the Community to Community Media as Part of Civil Society Networks

The term *community media* accommodates media initiatives from urban or rural contexts, media focussing on farming or agricultural issues, alternative media, indigenous radio stations or special interest fanzines. Other projects call themselves local TV stations, women or youth radios, free radios, civil society media or temporarily provide a platform for all of those different approaches at the same time. All these self-descriptions provide an insight into the diversity of community media and result in equally diverse definitions of *community* and *community media*.

Fluidity of Community Media and Multi-Theoretical Approach

Community media are not solely bound to geographical spaces like quartiers or neighbourhoods. New forms and possibilities of mobility, movements from rural to urban centres in search for work or refugee movements in the aftermath of violent conflicts can change the profile of a neighbourhood, village or city in a short time. Also, groups and persons living in the same quartiers do not necessarily have common interests and therefore do not necessarily build a community environment in the common sense.

Contemporary approaches see *community* and therefore *community media* as a more fluid and flexible concept where persons can be part of a number of communities and switch between those different identities. Community media reflect this diversity of local communities and identities and consequently constitute physical places accommodating this fluidity by offering short or long-term collaborations for groups and individuals to exchange, work together or use the communication tools and channels provided.

This fluidity and flexibility makes it difficult to tackle the description of community media via a one-theory approach as Bailey et al (2008) state:

> *"Mono-theoretical approaches focus on only certain characteristics, ignoring other aspects of the identity of alternative media. This theoretical problem necessitates the use of different approaches to defining alternative media [synonym for community media] that allow for complementary emphasis on different aspects of alternative media."*[5]

The reality of community media rather shows that they are not exclusively bound to one theoretical framework or working concept but rather host and combine a multi-theory approach combing several aspects of the following theoretical descriptions.

- **Community Media serving the Community:** Community media provide articulation space for marginalised and underrepresented communities. However, it remains unclear what constitutes a community e.g. common interests, territory or a shared practice.
- **Community Media as Alternative to Mainstream Media:** Community media offer a space for alternative or marginalised opinions which are not represented in the mainstream media. Opinions and values, however, can be incorporated into the mainstream and therefore what is "alternative" at one point can be become mainstream at another stage.

5 Bailey et al. (2008) p5

- **Community Media as Part of Civil Society:** Community media accommodate the communication needs of civil society agents e.g. NGOs, CSOs and local initiatives. It can also be said that community media thereby become an essential part in the constitution of civil society through offering a communication platform.
- **Community Media as Network Nodes:** Community Media can be seen as an essential part of civil society, however, through their connections to other civil society agents e.g. NGOs and local initiatives, they form a physical space—a network hub or node—for the civil society to exchange and collaborate.

The "community media as network node" approach accommodates the richness and diversity of community media's everyday practice, a mixture of serving the community, building a platform for alternative and underrepresented opinions and groups and being part of civil society. Community media as a part of a network and a physical space for networking between groups and individuals considers community media as an active part of civil society. Community media thereby have the agency to actively create and shape their environment together with other civil society agents rather than solely providing a communication platform.

3. The Potential of Community Media Networks for Peace Building, Conflict Transformation and Community Development

This part will explore the potential of community media to build networks for peace building, conflict transformation and community building using the example of a community media network in the South West Region in Cameroon.

a. The Cameroonian Community Media Landscape

In many Cameroonian regions TV reception is still restricted by the availability of electricity and high acquisition costs, newspapers do not achieve a high penetration especially in the rural areas with lower literacy rates and internet as information source is limited to the urban areas.

On the other hand, in Cameroon over 100 community media[6] — in most cases radio stations — are operational and build a dense network which educates, entertains and informs the local population. These small-scale media outlets sometimes provide the sole sources of local, regional and in some cases national and international news at an affordable price: a radio and a set of batteries are available for less than 5,000 CFCA (around €7.5) and keep running for some time.

In addition, these local radios broadcast programmes on human rights topics, health and social issues, local culture, agriculture and farming, literacy programs, community events, and in many cases present such programmes in local languages.

Nevertheless, the Cameroonian third media sector faces many challenges. The management of diverse local cultural and social groups, the influx of new communities and inner-state movements i.e. from rural to urban areas, generation conflicts, inter-religious conflicts, exclusion of marginalised groups from participating in societal processes (especially young persons and women) and the challenges of new communication technologies shape the work of community-based media on a daily basis.

Therefore, a redefinition of the work with community media in the area of peace building, social change and justice, addressing current conflicts, inter-religious dialogue, community development and conflict transformation needs to be pursued. The aim is to realise the potential of bringing community media together in a network-like envi-

6 Friedrich Ebert Foundation (2014) p. 95; PNDP (2015) np

ronment to work on a common ground regardless of their local setting and background. It has to be acknowledged that community media have direct connections to the local population — as listeners and producers — and host CSOs, NGOs and community members in their programmes. They are unique platforms to educate the general public on strategies and tools of conflict-sensitive communication through information on the current challenges Cameroonian society faces.[7]

b. *We dey na for Peace* – A Community Media Network for Peace, Justice and Development in the South West Region in Cameroon[8]

From 6 to 10 July 2015, during a workshop for community media in the South West Region in Cameroon on community media and news production, participating community media held an informal meeting to discuss the potential to continuously work together on issues of peace building and conflict transformation. The nine community media participating in this meeting agreed to continue their work and to establish exchanges on relevant issues and topics concerning peace building, social justice and community development in the region.

Less than a year later, on 27 April 2016 the 4th network meeting took place in Buea, in the South West Region of Cameroon, which hosted 14 community media or community-based communication organisations. This meeting marked the launch of the radio campaign "*We dey na for peace*"[9] to promote the potential of community media in peace building, conflict transformation and community development.

The network members produced an audio signation featuring the campaign slogan *We dey na for peace* in four languages (English, Pidgin-

7 Pavarala (2015) p. 87

8 The PCC started a community media mapping project in the South West Region in Cameroon, the first step of which was a baseline data survey conducted during the 4th network meeting of the community media in the South West Region in Cameroon in Buea on 27th April 2016. All the data presented here are taken from this survey.

9 *We dey na for peace* in Pidgin-English means *We stand for peace*

English, French and Bakweri). In addition, the community media stations will produce micro-programmes which include radio plays, documentaries and information programmes on local and community issues to inform and educate the local public on issues of peace building and conflict transformation.

The launch of the campaign *We dey na for peace* also marked the start of a mapping project of the community media sector in the South West Region in Cameroon to assess the potential impact of the activities pursued in the network.

Location and Technical Reach of the Network

One uncertainty in the broadcasting reality of community media is the technical reach. The media are aware of their transmitter's broadcasting power, but find it challenging to assess the reality of their technical reach because of the topography of their surroundings and lack of financial means for an evaluation. In this part, the radio stations rely on the feedback of the community via text messages and calls and staff experience.

During the 4th network meeting the community media estimated their technical reach based on their personal- or first-hand experience of other members of their organisation and community feedback from call-in shows, text messages where persons state where they are calling/texting from.

The following community media organisations have indicated their technical reach:

- Bonakanda Rural Radio in Bonakanda
- CBC Radio in Buea
- CBS Radio in Buea
- Chariot FM in Buea
- Divine Mercy Radio in Buea
- Eden TV and radio in Limbe
- HiTV in Buea and Bamenda
- Konye Community Radio in Konye

- Lake Site Radio Kumba
- Lebialem Community Radio in Menji
- Manyu Community Radio in Mamfe
- Mount Kope Community Radio in Nyasoso
- Muslim Community Communication in Buea via co-operations with different radio and TV stations in the South West Region in Cameroon
- Ocean City Radio in Kumba
- Revival Gospel Radio in Buea

The map below gives an idea of the technical reach of the community media in the South West Region. The areas within the red line are in reach of at least one community media in the South West and show the potential impact of common and organised activities like the *We dey na for peace* campaign.[10]

10 Map created by Alexander Vojvoda (2016); stars indicate the position of the community media and communication organisation with more than one media outlet or communication organisation in Buea and Kumba

The community media network's estimated technical reach shows that the South West community media reach at least 1.5 million persons in the South West Region of Cameroon alone, however, their broadcasts cover most parts of the Littoral region with Cameroon's biggest city Douala and parts of the North-West, West and Centre Region adding up to approximately 5 million potential listeners. Even parts of Equatorial-Guinea and Nigeria are within the technical reach, which is accounted for in the programmes the community media situated in Cameroon's border regions produce. These address cross-border business, land conflicts in border regions, multi-lingual programmes or provide information from Cameroon in local languages for Cameroonian migrants in these countries.

Co-ordinated activities between the community media network members through common programmes e.g. on peak time slots addressing relevant topics for the local communities and promoting issues of peace, conflict transformation and community development have the potential to reach a significant percentage of the population in the South West and other regions of Cameroon and even neighbouring countries.

At present, the network is working on selected micro-programmes for heavy rotation for specific target groups e.g. persons using public transport. Imagine a person takes a bus in Mamfe in the Northern border region to Nigeria to travel to Douala and all the community media on his/her way down to the Littoral region broadcast the same programme, maybe with additions or summaries in the local languages.

Programme Structure of the Network Members

The network members also reported the distribution of their programmes related to the following categories:

- Animation and entertainment programmes
- Civil society programmes which includes content of NGOs, CSOs and local initiatives
- Programmes mostly dedicated to community and local content; maybe even produced in local languages

- Culture in general or local culture
- Programmes on education or literacy e.g. English language radio courses
- Programmes mostly addressing health issues e.g. Malaria prevention, HIV/AIDS programmes
- Programmes which predominantly broadcast music e.g. choirs
- News and information programmes e.g. daily news cast, news reviews etc.
- Programmes with religious or spiritual focus e.g. meditations
- Programmes dealing with agricultural or environmental issues

Programmes	
Animation/Entertainment	7.58 %
Civil Society/NGOs/CSOs	8.17 %
Community/Local Content	15.33 %
Culture	5.58 %
Education	7.83 %
Health	5.58 %
Music	8.33 %
News/Information	15.08 %
Religion/Spiritual	22.50 %
Environment/Agriculture	4.00 %
Total	100.00 %

The data shows that the programmes of the community media in the South West Region of Cameroon are predominantly dedicated to inform and educate listeners with almost 20% addressing culture, education and health, 15% community or local topics and 15% covering news and information. Programmes are accompanied by (local) music, animation programmes and programmes produced by local civil society organisations and initiatives.

These figures demonstrate the content diversity of community media and the importance of community media in a local context for communities sometimes being the only source of information on topics important to the local population.

The data indicates that community media already contribute to a large extent to a pluralistic media landscape though their diversity in groups and persons involved, languages used and focus on local content. Therefore, looking at community media as network nodes adds a new layer to potential efforts in peace building and conflict management.

Languages

Cameroon is a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual country with over 200 ethnic groups and tribes and probably even more local languages. Community media play an important part in providing information in local languages to the local community and thereby also contributing to the preservation of unique local traditions and culture though the use of local languages.

The survey shows that throughout the entire network at least 18 languages are used in broadcasts.[11] On average, a radio station in the network broadcasts in 4.5 languages with English being named 12 times, Pidgin-English 11 times, French 8 times and Bakweri 3 times.

The Eden group in Limbe with its TV and radio station is the media organisation with the biggest language diversity in their programmes: eleven languages are used in this station's programmes.

This language diversity constitutes one of the biggest potentials in the peace building and conflict transformation effort in the South West region in Cameroon. To make messages understandable using the local languages is essential. In comparison to public service media or commercial media, community media are the only civil society organisations which have the resources and persons that can produce shows in

11 Some community media indicated that they use *mother tongue*, however, did not specify which language this is (4 times)

the local languages and thereby communicate with the local population in their mother tongue.

Furthermore, the use of Pidgin-English is increasing the potential of cutting-across community boundaries as English and French is not always well understood especially in rural settings. Pidgin-English acts as a lingua franca particularly in the Anglophone areas of Cameroon. This fact is underlined by an increased audience participation via texts, calls and messages whenever programmes are produced in Pidgin.[12]

Staff Structure

In general, it can be said that 571 persons are involved in the running of the community media in the network either as paid or volunteer staff and in different positions including technicians, journalists, presenters, administrative personnel or at management level.

Nevertheless, it needs to be admitted that the number of volunteers contributing to the programmes is changing continuously as programmes produced are being added or removed for personal reasons e.g. persons move to another area or financial constraints e.g. volunteers cannot regularly afford the transport costs.

However, most of the content production in the community is completed by volunteers (388 voluntary journalists/presenters vs. 66 paid journalists/presenters).

An issue that needs to be addressed is that women account for a higher percentage of the content production (229 women versus 225 men are journalists or anchor/presenters).

However, only 47 women have paid positions (versus 87 men in paid roles) and only 9 women are employed and paid at management level (versus 21 men).

12 Full list of the 18 languages mentioned: English (12 times), Pidgin-English (11), French (8), Mokpwe/Bakweri (3), Meta (2), Belondo, Igbo, Bakossi, Bayangi, Bafut, Bali, Kenyani, Ejaghen, Douala, Limbum, Borroro, Hausa, Arabic

	Staff Volunteers		Staff Paid Staff	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Technicians	19	7	22	4
Journalists	152	189	23	24
Anchor/Presenter	37	10	13	6
Administrative	6	4	17	8
Management	9	4	12	5
Total	223	214	87	47

Two network members work without any paid staff and a look at the local surroundings of the TV and radio stations opens an even bigger potential for raising awareness in the area of peace building and conflict transformation and showcase community media as places for community development and for bringing people together.

The survey shows that at least 5,882 persons are engaged in the periphery of the community media: Either they support the work of the community media through membership in the association which is running the TV or radio station, they are a member of the fan club or are part of the board and thereby directly or indirectly contribute to the maintenance and running of the TV or radio station.

4. Conclusion

These initial survey data provide members of the community media network in the South West Region in Cameroon with some insight into the potential of networking amongst community media. However, if we come back to the notion of community and what this term means for community media, Alison Gilchrist (2009) states in her book *The well-connected community – A networking approach to community development* that:

> *"the experience of community is generated by and manifest in the informal networks that exist between people, between groups and between organisations."*[13]

If communities are informal networks on a micro-level, then community media are physical spaces to build and cultivate these connections within communities, but more importantly establish relations beyond community boundaries. However, for Gilchrist (2009) to establish these informal connections the building of *social capital* is important and essential to build a resilient and socially coherent community.[14]

> *"Social capital can be defined as a collective resource embedded in and released from informal networks […] These are based on shared norms of trust and mutuality that bestow advantage on individuals and communities: "better connected people enjoy better returns"*[15]

Community media can be a key role for building social capital, trust and respect between communities, groups and individuals and function as a dialogue platform for parties to a conflict. Through their locally embedded work, community media are in a privileged position to be able to mediate between different groups and operate as mediators and include local communities in their programmes and thereby create a platform for the local population to engage, encounter and exchange. The community media network in the South West region in Cameroon seeks to combine these qualities and account for the local diversities constituting the strengths of the members involved.

13 Gilchrist (2009), p 1

14 Compare the interview with Alison Gilchrist on community development and networking in this issue p. ??

15 Gilchrist (2009), p 9

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"Informal networks are needed to build communities in the first place, to build that sense of connectedness and mutuality"

An interview with Alison Gilchrist

The UN defines community development as "a process where community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems". In her book "The Well-Connected Community – A Networking Approach to Community Development," ***Alison Gilchrist*** *states that a successful approach in community development should seek to build communities with well-developed networks and thereby find tactics, strategies and actions for these groups to solve conflicts and challenges they are facing.*

Alison Gilchrist worked for many years as a community development worker in inner-city neighbourhoods in Bristol, UK. She taught community and youth work at the University of the West of England and gained a Ph.D. researching the value of networking for community development. Her Ph.D. research was published under the title: "The Well-Connected Community: A Networking Approach to Community Development". For further details on Alison Gilchrist's work please visit www.alisongilchrist.co.uk

One of the key terms in your book "The Well-Connected Community – A Networking Approach to Community Development" is of course 'community'. How do you understand the term community in your work?
Alison Gilchrist (AG): I see community as a feeling that people have, this belonging to one another as they have something in common. There is also interaction, relationship and connections between the individuals and groups. On the one hand, it is something that all of us experience

in our everyday lives, but when we start to define the term *community* it becomes much more slippery. But I think it is a useful concept because it conveys a notion that there is a layer of society that is about our commitment to one another, our need to share and exchange things without necessarily requiring contracts. So it is a give and take. We are looking out for one another, taking care of one another.

I think the most important aspect of community is about the connections between people and how people make use of those connections. Those connections are not necessarily just about sharing physical space where people live, a village or a neighbourhood in a town, or even a country. Community can also be about connections people make through things they share. They come together, they collaborate or they see each other regularly and interact on that basis. There is also an aspect of community where people share a social identity. By that I mean people have something that is important, an important aspect of their being, and that is something very positive about community.

But community could also be something that is negative, exclusive and rejecting. For example, shared experience of oppression or a group rejecting others who do not fit in because of their values or beliefs.

How do you understand your work with communities? How would you define your approach to community development?

AG: I think it is about finding ways to help people in their communities, support them, identify issues that affect them and help them find tactics and strategies to achieve certain goals. So it is about bringing people together who share that very same idea, who have the same experience, that same problem.

Community development is to develop strategies to change the current situation, to change policies, to improve services and talk about and achieve a better access to resources so that they are distributed in a fairer way. There is something about doing that collectively and openly. In a sense, community development is about working at the bottom and building upwards.

You suggest in your book that community is not a static term, it is more fluid. Persons can be part of different communities at the same time, depending on the social context they are embedded in. What are the advantages of this flexibility?

AG: I think the advantage is that flexibility means to some extent you can choose which community you want to belong to. People support a particular football team or choose to be part of a particular religion. This is a choice and it can change. So you can equally choose to change that identity, come out of that community and find another different one that maybe suits your lifestyle better. I think that it is valuable and useful to individuals to have that fluidity, because it recognises that social context changes and that people's places in that context can also change.

For example, I used to work in a poor inner-city area in Bristol (UK) and within that area there are working class communities, migrant communities, communities of older and younger people. I use the term communities in the sense of sections of society that have something in common, interact regularly, have respect for each other or some kind of affinity. These groups were also organised around their particular identities and communities and did not interact a lot, but became rather hostile towards each other.

What we tried to do in that neighbourhood was to make connections across those borders between actual people. We engaged with older and younger people to work together collaboratively and to bring people from a different ethnicity, from different religions together on a common basis. In this specific case it was to discuss with old and young from different religions and backgrounds the topic of "growing older". That is an informal network, they became better connected.

Through this informal network we organised a social club for ageing persons with different backgrounds in this area, recognising that lots of them had migrated to the UK and were now experiencing categories of social isolation and mental distress for example because of language barriers. Sometime they were caught up in their daughter's or

son's home and did not have the competence to come out and explore other interests.

This also brought conflicts and tensions between and within the different groups. It was not a straight forward development but the social club did well, and I think it contributed to a sense of cohesion in the area. Now people were not at each other's throats, and that promoted better understanding.

As you described community can also be an enclosed group of people deliberately separating themselves from other communities. At this point you mention the importance of building connections and relations. You also write in your book* "the experience of community is generated by and manifest in the informal networks that exist between people, between groups and between organisations."** ***How important are networks in community development to address or even prevent conflicts between communities?

AG: I did the research on which the book is based, because I strongly believe that informal networks are needed to build communities in the first place, to build that sense of connectedness and mutuality. These networks need to be maintained. I think that nurtures poor communities to create a place that supports people and promotes their well-being.

So if you ask, how do I create a network, I think it is difficult to say because it very much depends on the spaces, places, the opportunities that exist for people to interact sometimes very casually, but also how they can learn to co-operate with one another and deal with their differences, work through difficulties. I am a great believer in having places within communities, within community centres, schools, even within buildings where people can come together socially, if you like, just to get to know one another to find what they have in common, and gradually build some respect and trust.

Of course, I do recognise informal networks are not always accessible. For example, if you are trying to build a community network around a specific interest like cooking and you meet in a building with a kitchen

that is not accessible to some people for example with disabilities. It is uncomfortable for some people: there is no wheel chair access. It is too noisy, so people with hearing impairments cannot hear properly. It is in a building that feels quite hostile to some sections of the community or maybe just unfamiliar. For example, young people fitting in an older people's home. So then you have to think about all those things and find ways of encouraging people. You have to make that first step into those places or find alternatives that enhance different communities and make them as accessible and inclusive as possible.

But networks can also be a way of helping people find allies. People the community can work with: allies, collaborators, friends, supporters, champions and donors actually as well. So if you have a wide network, or you are well-connected, you are more likely to be able to act fast. You need to stay organised around the purpose you want to serve. And you are also more likely to have influence over the people in making decisions that could help you; that could improve your situation.

For me such a place can be a community media. Community media form places where especially minorities or marginalised groups can articulate themselves. The programmes are produced by volunteers who are community members, but also more formal institutions like local associations, NGOs, civil society organisations can be involved.

AG: You are reminding me that a key aspect of community development is the citizen alternatives and these rely on voluntary efforts. Therefore, it is something that can flourish outside the mainstream, outside of the institutions.

I have not perfectly emphasised yet if I talk about a *well-connected community* I am not just talking about internal connections or even cross community connections. *Well-connected* is about links with voluntary organisations, civil society organisations, even state agencies. So it is about having, I mean in a social capital term, it is about bonding, creating trust and respect and linking social capital on every possible level.

It is not just about expecting communities to rely on their own efforts. It is about challenging how things are done in general and trying to bring about change so that things are better for those people who are most disadvantaged in a community. In this case the community's assets are used to build alliances and the community's foundation and not outside agencies coming in telling communities this is what you should be doing.

To come back to the example of community media as places for community development. Can community media be places to facilitate the building of these well-connected communities?

AG: I mean one of those great things about community media are these issues about communication. People listening to each other's views, telling their stories and working together as volunteers, they are producers, performers or whatever in their local radio. That is a good way of making connections in terms of actual individuals making connections and making connections with each other's lives, problems or aspirations people have. Generally speaking, we all have the same aspirations. We want security, we want to perform, we want to fulfil our ambitions, we want to be happy and healthy and so on.

But there is not a straightforward solution to any conflict. Because I think unless you do not really keep a hold of the concepts of equality, fairness and inclusion, community development could simply be about how communities can be organised against each other, and that is not what community development is about.

Why do you emphasise the importance of informal networks and not other more institutionalised structures or organisation forms in community development?

AG: I think the main reason is that community is about relationships and social capital, which means, whether the persons involved trust and respect one another. And often that can happen more easily through informal settings, informal opportunities for people to talk to and com-

pliment one another and to work together. Sometimes when the structures and the procedures are too formal, they can put people off, because people are too bound by the rules or are too worried about doing the wrong thing in a formal environment. Those informal interactions cannot happen behind the scenes or up stage where people's behaviour or what they say are scrutinised.

How does community development understand conflicts on the level of communities?

AG: A way of understanding community-based or community-generated conflicts is thinking about inequality in power and access to resources. There is one section of the population that is barred from having equal rights to services or opportunities or which does not have access to a really important resource, which could be water, it could be land, it could be jobs. That is almost inevitably going to lead to conflicts, especially when people feel that the situation is unfair or reverses a previous situation or arrangements.

When I was working in Sri Lanka there was a huge backlash against the Tamils being favoured by the British colonial administration in terms of civil service jobs. The majority population in turn, quite understandably, when they were in government, wanted to reverse that discrimination and create opportunities for the Sinhala population. As we know, this led to a violent civil war. It was about power inequalities and access to opportunities.

How can community development approaches facilitate in conflict situations?

AG: I think it is about trying to create a different dimension to people's lives which is more positive and about what they have in common while they going to get something across. But that is so much easier to say than to actually do in practice. There are projects in the past which cannot be ignored for example in Northern Ireland, Bosnia and Hercegovina and I think in Cameroon you also find examples. Commu-

nity developers need to start joint projects and campaigns for example in the educational area involving different groups and build social compatibility within specific areas, without allowing links between and influence of different sectarian groups.

Community development and peace building/conflict transformation share some tools in approaching conflicts. I think of storytelling, different types of mapping, etc. These tools use informal ways to understand conflicts, gather information, bring in real examples, describe opinions and deal with different perceptions. Which links do you see between community development and conflict transformation or peace building?
AG: Story telling is one way in which people are able to articulate their experiences and while providing, as you say, real life examples. It is about finding voices because there are a lot of people who do not feel like they have a voice in society or in certain situations. They are not heard. Their experiences do not have any power within decision making.

There is one important thing I like about story telling. Story telling is not the better argument; it is just saying this is how it is, this is how it has been or here is an example of how our community has experienced this or that is what we are talking about. And there are lots of ways of thinking about story telling. There is the technique of appreciative inquiry which is linked to asset-based community development where people talk about the things that are really important and valuable in their community. They talk about the positive aspects of their lives which might be about the lovely experience that their families had in the community. Or it could be anything, and it is very much about people saying in tales what is good about where they live, and then building on that trying to improve on that while preventing constantly saying that these are the bad things and these are the things we have to change. So I can say that story telling would be a really good way of enabling people to find their voices in conflict situations.

But of course story telling can also be a way of rehearsing the bad things that will help "them" stand for it, unless it's very carefully facil-

itated with an emphasis on the positive aspects. And it could become yet another way of saying to one side of the community, you are the bad guys.

Thank you, Alison!

Working in a network to prevent the spread of violence and the emergence of new conflicts in an insecure situation: multiple intervention approaches

*By Dupleix F. Kuenzob**

Simone Goyard-Fabre[1] compared building peace to the task of Sisyphus[2] in her eponymous work. In other words, building peace takes time. It is repetitive, complex, arduous work which is almost never finished. When we think we have made considerable progress, when we think we have set things straight and are dreaming of communication being re-established between the stakeholders in a conflict, a single fight is all it takes to bring down, like a house of cards, all the efforts deployed with so much dynamism, by so many players both individual and institutional. This is because in fact, peace building is work whose substance, subject and purpose are people. Human beings. Creatures that are not only described as diverse and undulating (Montaigne[3]), but also unpredictable and sometimes versatile. As much as it is fundamentally difficult and random to grasp the essence of humans as they offer numerous facets and multiple contrarieties, and so much do they present inconstancy and sporadic and instant changes of heart, as much it is difficult to define people in isolation or in a group and specifically the one in front of us, or to explain with confidence and certainty how they are acting.

1 Professor of philosophy of law at the University of Caen Basse-Normandie

2 Simone Goyard-Fabre, Le travail de Sisiphe, Place de la Sorbonne Paris, Published by VRIN, 1994,

3 Montaigne (1533 – 1592), Quel inconstant que l'homme! "He is a subject that is marvellously vain, diverse and undulating. It is difficult to found a judgement on him that is constant and uniform"

* Executive Secretary, World Dynamics of Young People (WDYP), Cameroon

This is a stance that World Dynamics of Young People (WDYP) owes to its experience on the ground. It s an organisation which has devoted its efforts, since 2008, to the promotion or even construction of peace centred on the harmonious development of the population and their living conditions. For the major part of its actions, the organisation targets mostly young people whom it **prepares for understanding and assuming public responsibilities with a view to good governance, democratisation and decentralisation of Cameroon society**[4]. Its initiatives are deployed on a local scale with the Municipality as the transformational epicentre[5]. The reason behind this choice is that in Cameroon the Municipality is the unit of administration and governance that is the closest to the population following the laws on decentralisation. The work undertaken has regularly taken several orientations which combine similar approaches sometimes to development, advocacy, and even the humanitarian, even though emergency interventions are not on the agenda of the WDYP's modes of action. The lesson that emerges is that peace building cannot escape a plural and multiple-form approach. That is to say, any positive transformation approach to society partakes of peace building. Indeed, *"given the close links between peace, security and development, the promotion of peace and development cooperation must necessarily follow common strategy lines"*[6]. WDYP shares this logic by maintaining that peace is above all the continuous, concerted search for solutions to the common or isolated problems individuals or groups of individuals are faced with in a given place.

With this as a starting point, we must accept that peace building requires a variety of different skills. It must, at the same time, address the deep causes of the problems encountered with the aim of chang-

4 Objective defined by the Integrated Programme for participation in process of Socio Political Influence (P.I.2P.IS) set up by WDYP in 2007.

5 The Municipality is defined by the plethora of laws framing Cameroon's decentralisation policy as a decentralized public authority and public law moral entity with legal personality and financial autonomy.

6 Message concerning the continuation of measures for the civil promotion of peace and the boosting of human rights of 15 June 2007.

ing the reigning political situation and find sustainable solutions to prevailing injustices. In addition, peace building must provide immediate practical aid and encouragement to achieve the political changes that will be useful for the population. This is the foundation of the necessity of working in a network, for no organisation, irrespective of the size, can bring together as many skills, have at its disposal as much time and indispensable resources (human, material and financial) to occupy as much space as required for resolving the problems or conflicts and so build peace.

It is interesting, the better to articulate the preceding, to share the example of work recently carried out within the framework of the Civil Peace Service (CPS) programme, which consisted in an action research operation on the enlisting of young people into armed groups in Cameroon[7].

The main purpose of this study was to compensate for the risk of disinformation of the population on the situation of insecurity in the Far-North of Cameroon, particularly on the phenomenon of enlistment. The main goal assigned to the study was to procure reliable information enabling the development players and political authorities to effectively combat the problem of enlistment. The information to be assembled by the research was to help not only to understand the phenomenon of enlistment, identify the reasons for its existence, challenge the powers (at local, national and international level) on the causes identified, develop proposals for solutions with a view to drafting public policy, or contribute to the design of development projects, but also to allow WDYP to implement responses to the problem directly.

The theatre of action (the Far North) was a thousand leagues from the Yaoundé headquarters of WDYP. That is why WDYP had to make use of other players, members of the Civil Peace Service

7 This research was made possible thanks to the encouragements from the mobile team at CPS, in this case Flaubert Djateng who personally undertook to speak of the initiative to the Friedrich Ebert Foundation; which will rally to the approach by increasing the number of intervention sites and contributing to the publication of the results of the study.

On the choice of participants

Networking is an integral part of the global strategy of the Civil Peace Service (CPS) programme that sends professionals to partner organisations all over the world with the aim of stemming violence without employing military means and supporting the commitment of civil society to resolve conflicts peacefully. To support projects aimed at non-violent conflict resolution in various countries worldwide, a number of development and peace organisations have joined up to form the Civil Peace Service Consortium. This consortium is a joint initiative that is particularly interesting as it includes non-governmental as well as governmental agencies thanks to funding from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). Our action research is part of the CPS strategy.

One of the criteria used to choose the direct players to initiate this adventure was of course geographic area. Which zones or regions in Cameroon were the most exposed to enlistment? Which players were in place with which skills appropriate to the work to be undertaken? How can they be successfully involved, respecting the autonomy of action of each of the stakeholders? What degree of supervision and control should be observed to ensure the expected quality is achieved? So many questions it was important to answer before commencing. Of course, we selected those locations with indexes showing established exposure to the phenomenon of enrolment. The organisations present, local or from the vicinity, were automatically qualified due to their proximity with the zone and the presumption of knowledge of the environment. But presence and command of the field are not enough. We had to negotiate and obtain the availability to cooperate so that the assigned schedule be followed in all its consecutive stages.

On the role of participants

The leadership performed by WDYP conferred on it the mission of making the initial proposal of working tools, coordination of all the players involved, interfacing with the technical and financial partners, mediating for the summonsing of meetings, formatting of final documents, and communication. Empowered for the purpose, Pierre Fichter, CPS peaceworker, toiled day and night to get things moving in the right direction. Between weeks of sending emails that remained unanswered and making phonecalls to set up appointments and promises that were not kept, it would have been easy to become discouraged. By dint of repeated reminders, he was occasionally able to obtain clearance for a draft version of documents to be validated. Did anyone read them or not? The most important thing was to avoid conclusions on the form and substance without it being communicated to all of the stakeholders. The research protocol, the survey tools, the results analysed and the study report document all experienced and were subjected to this path, not forgetting the selection criteria for the interviewers.

Having come to an agreement on the profile and number of interviewers, the responsibility was left to each organisation to recruit them in compliance with the requirements of the protocol. Prior to this exercise, each organisation had defined the material and financial outlines of the local version of the global survey strategy. The financial resources managed in a decentralised way had then been made available to all the parties after arbitration carried out proportionately to the available global budget.

Shared, joint actions

Once the survey tools were validated in the spirit of the work described above, it was agreed that to train the interviewers or at least immerse them in the tools and the survey methodology would imply having all

the participants in one place. Such meetings are important and even indispensable for promoting and motivating a common vision and comprehension, to level out misunderstandings, and especially highlight the dynamics of the DO NO HARM approach. A place that was neutral to all involved was chosen. Ngaoundéré in the Region of Adamoaua, had the benefit of hosting the participants' immersion meeting. Interviewers, the people in charge of the stakeholder organisations involved in the research, representatives of the technical and financial partners[8].

Highlighting the results of the study

"It emerges from the study on the enlisting of young people into armed groups that religion is not the fundamental motivation behind young people joining armed bands, that discontent and exclusion are a favourable terrain for violence, that young people have confidence in their army, that there is a need to be well informed, for the media sometimes create confusion in public opinion , that poverty and unemployment play a decisive role in the appeal armed groups have for young people, that young people living in a rural milieu are more vulnerable than those living in cities, and lastly that mystico-religious beliefs play a role in young people joining up to fight alongside the armed bands. For these reasons the conflict prevention programmes must address youth"[9].

This experience of working in a network did not consist solely in producing a study report, but gave rise to a series of other activities, sometimes involving new players. Even before the results of the study were obtained, an initiative of awareness raising for youth on the harm done by violence was set up under the concept of the caravan for peace: no to terror, initiated jointly with Sweet @rt'Frika, an association of young artists. The mobile exhibition of caricatures carrying slogans and mes-

8 Brot Fuer Die Welt and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung had been respectively represented.

9 Excerpt from the study report; http://www.fes-kamerun.org/cameroon/index.php/activities/123-l-enrolement-des-jeunes-dans-les-groupes-armes-au-cameroun-etude

sages to challenge youth then offered a triple space to young people to have their awareness raised in order to put themselves at the service of the search and building of sustainable peace on an individual but also community level. A reception space for exchanging on the work of the artists from the caravan and the World Dynamics of Young People was typified by a moment for discussing the vision and the idea of peace with the population of the locations hosting the caravan. The other space, the one for discovering the exhibition, allowed the young people to engage with around twenty illustrated messages of the caravan printed in giant portable materials. Each support carried a slogan and a specific drawing accompanied with slams or texts relating current events. The third space lastly provided the visitor with the opportunity to allow their creative talents to blossom in a "Free Style" workshop. Under the supervision of the artists of the caravan, the visitors could draw, paint or write their messages on topics such as violence, radicalisation and conflicts.

The publication of the results of the study was prolonged through the organisation of the topical discussions aimed at perpetrating change in favour of social cohesion and peace building in attitudes, behaviour, systems and structures through dialogue. For each topic taken from the conclusions of the study, a discussion workshop was called in which the players specifically concerned and challenged by the subject were assembled for reflection, rallying a representative number of young people. A final communiqué sanctioned each workshop. Said communiqué was disseminated to the public and sent to different stakeholders impacted by the content.

A resolution was made that all the localities who hosted survey units would hold a conference to present the results of the study. Although interested in these results, certain authorities took their time in agreeing to hold such a conference in their administrative circumscription. Their lack of enthusiasm was explained by the fact that insecurity is taking on more and more forms and varied proportions in Cameroon, with fear very often accompanying the media coverage of the authorities.

This particularly enriching experience shows how peacebuilding work encompasses a wide range of minute interventions whose effects, no matter how small, are precious contributions to security, especially if they lead towards a heightened feeling of community. From this point of view, peace building never ends because at any moment, the relations or the cohesion between individuals or groups can be broken and communication and dialogue interrupted. Peace building shall therefore consist in implementation to reinforce the lines of communication, interaction to create, solidify or consolidate the social fabric in order to respond better to the current and future needs of the people present. These needs can be of several orders, it is a question of creating the dynamics of networking so that these needs can be taken into account completely. In view of all this, peace building is fundamentally a work of ants and Sisyphus[10]. Even targeting a sector or social category ends up covering a wider scope and affecting others. In such a way that it becomes impossible, as in a system where everything directly affects everything else, to build peace without the dynamics of networking. However, we must not run with the hare and hunt with the hounds, out of an absolute concern to work in a network, or we risk creating new foyers of tension instead of the peace so sought after. In this respect, a proper selection of the connectors is a prerequisite. Also, the individual nature of peace builders occupies an inestimable place in the process.

10 "Borrowed from Greek mythology, the expression "Sysyphus' rock" is a metaphor symbolising an interminable task. Sisyphus, one of the characters of Greek mythology, attracted the anger of the Gods on Olympus. As a punishment, they condemned him to roll a huge rock up a mountain. However, once at the top, Sisyphus did not have enough room to block his rock which immediately rolled back down, forcing him to push it up again…" ttp://www.linternaute.com/expression/langue-francaise/12558/le-rocher-de-sisyphe

Peace work and networks

The case of the Cameroon Network of Human Rights Organisations – RECODH

By Andreas Kahler, Paul Guy Hyomeni***

Intro

The relationship between peace and network building, although important, is not easy to analyse. We would like to shed some light on the problem and then present the case of our organisation RECODH, exploring the ways forward.

Let's take a look at global terror threats. Attacks happen wherever we look, it seems, on all the continents, in capitals and outlying districts. Terrorism appears omnipresent, at least at first glance. And this has a lot to do with — networks. Daesh, IS and other terrorist collectives perform as highly efficient networks — violent and brutal because of their connections and coherence. Collective violence and networks do not contradict each other. On the contrary, analysing terrorist networks has become almost a key discipline not only in security studies.

Even more, in places where civil peace service efforts are at risk of being overshadowed by the impact of terrorism, we really need to face the social complexity at stake when reflecting on strategies for peacebuilding.

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** Coordinator of RECODH, Cameroon

Lessons from Peace Research

In the search for suitable peace concepts both the idea of connectivity and the distinction between negative versus positive peace are already implied in the early research by Johan Galtung (Johan Galtung, A Synthetic Approach to Peace Thinking (Ms. Unpublished, Oslo 1967) published in 2005 by transcend.org). A "connected peace theory" (Galtung, p. 27) looks for connections between peace and development as well as conditions, "means to obtain peace" (Galtung, p. 50) or consequences of forms of peace. Complexity is accounted for through analysing "the world as a set of related groups of related individuals" (Galtung, p. 53) and more systematically by what Galtung calls "associative approaches to peace problems" (Galtung, p. 63) — we will come back to this.

At the same time, since its inception, we find in Galtung's peace research the distinction between negative and positive peace: What defines a state of peace in a more appropriate manner than just calling it the "absence of organized collective violence"?

Galtung suggests we ask ourselves what characterises peaceful social life, i.e. where individuals have "a wide range of actions open to themselves". Perhaps this is what today we might coin a "good life". It is interesting to see at that early stage of theory building that the concept of peace did not refer to human rights but to the following list of "positive relations" or values: 1. Presence of cooperation, 2. Freedom from fear, 3. Freedom from want, 4. Economic growth and development, 5. Absence of exploitation, 6. Equality, 7. Justice, 8. Freedom of action, 9. Pluralism, 10. Dynamism.

Johan Galtung's search for a more comprehensive concept took into account early on what positively qualifies interaction (communication, cooperation, integration). Conditions of peace, in this regard mentioned "associative approaches to peace problems" (Galtung p. 63), build upon interpersonal and inter-group relationships.

However, how to make sense of this in more concrete terms today? New concepts of positive peace refer to dozens of criteria when com-

paring different nations and the state of their society. Let's take the 2016 Global Peace Index (www.visionofhumanity.org) from the Institute for Economics and Peace (GPI). Now, positive peace is defined as "the attitudes, institutions and structures that create and sustain peaceful societies." And since this also seems a rather vague definition, the index additionally refers to Sustainable Development Goal 16 (UN) with its 21 indicators. Key is nevertheless the close connectedness of peace and justice and on the other hand strong institutions, favouring "societal resilience".

Case in point: RECODH

Speaking of the Cameroon Network of Human Rights Organisations (RECODH, www.recodh.org), we might think of a kind of umbrella alliance or, coalition rather than an informal network — a set of contacts and relationshipsk — as the result of networking. Like other associations, it has its own constitution and constitutional governance bodies. This is not to say RECODH does not need networking, on the contrary, in order to extend coverage or to reach out to more rural areas RECODH must connect and link up with still more actors. For instance observing, watching human rights situations: are they violated or respected in certain zones? For the creation of effective monitoring, we have to build contacts with many stakeholders, also informants. And contact building means developing networks, i.e. networking.

Created in 2010, RECODH is the manifestation of the joint will of organizations working for the promotion and protection of human rights in Cameroon. According to its strategic plan, the network's vision reads: "In 2020, Cameroon shall be a country where human rights and fundamental freedoms are effectively respected without discrimination, through the performance and credibility of the members and administrative boards engaged and deployed nationally."

Typical activities of RECODH up till now include;

- Capacity building for members and others;
- Publication of reports on the human rights situation (electoral observation reports, respect for human rights in the Lom Pangar Hydroelectric Project, respect and violations of human rights in the fight against Boko Haram, human rights situation during ongoing evictions in the city of Douala, etc.);
- Organization of conferences: on freedom of assembly and public events (2014), first national forum on human rights in Cameroon (2015);
- Defence of human rights activists in conflict with the law and authorities.

RECODH's members are human rights organization across the whole country, its target groups: firstly, the member organisations; secondly, the Cameroon population in general and especially vulnerable social groups in targeted areas of Cameroon.

With several regional members and network branches already active for several years, a special focus on organizational regionalization has been applied since 2015, achieving the effective running of regional coordination boards in all ten regions. Last year for example, RECODH Littoral carried out an action research project on forced urban resettlements; and RECODH Centre implemented a public forum and parallel events on the occasion of the International Human Rights Day (10th December) in Ngoro, Central Region, in cooperation with the Civil Peace Service as well as the National Commission for Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

Thus, RECODH's new regional focus has become part and parcel of the running of the network; coordination teams in all ten regions of Cameroon link local member organisations (sub-division and division level) via focal points to the regional and national levels. What really gave decentralization a boost is RECODH's strategy process since late 2015, including, for instance, the strategic objectives, indicators and actions to be broken down into the specific regional realities. In order

to facilitate the top down and bottom up communication of strategic processes, four interregional workshops gathered representatives and members from all network levels and places. Thus there is one strategy but ten ways of implementation, so to speak. And at national level some things like global advocacy are easier than at local, while some human rights violations are most prominent in rural zones at a far remove from the capital, thus outreach programs are a must as well as the monitoring of local situations in the regions.

The multi-level network approach opens up new ways to respond to several challenges citizens encounter in Cameroon. First of all, public or state decentralization is still emerging, if advancing at all; and the capital institutions or infrastructures are far away for most people. So, civil society especially needs connections between the centre and the other parts of the country when problems are to be tackled. Peace problems and peace needs result — according to the Civil Peace Service Program Strategy — especially from certain social dynamics which can be described as fragmentation and segregation. Again, we are facing disintegration tendencies between the different parts of the country or regions, for instance the English speaking versus French speaking, the so called great North versus the South etc., not to mention even more particular tribal or clan differences. (On a lighter note, segregations are too many to be overcome by dyads or intermarriages.)

Like civil society in general, the RECODH network of course needs considerable capacities aimed at bridging the above-mentioned gaps. Data flow resulting from local monitoring activities — let's say referring to specific human rights violations — might seem to be a simple starting point. But already the internal governance ruling the CSO network and enabling it to set up such monitoring, to keep the same example, needs deliberations, if possible by everyone at all levels and in all the regions. However, that might not always be possible for or before decision-making. Here again, decentralization is still a work in progress.

Meaningful consultations among members across the regions and geographical levels require suitable chains, perhaps occasions, resources,

contacts, a common language or respective interpretation, know how, and readiness. In this regard, the network building has just begun. But the ground covered so far looks promising.

Is the realm of human rights and human rights defence especially favourable for associative approaches to peace building? Peacebuilding has as much in common with human rights defenders as it has in common with the work of conflict resolution. Reasons can be given from at least two points of view. Firstly, the goal of positive peace construction always builds upon some minimum consensus of respect of human rights in society and state. No (lasting) peace where there are (massive) violations of human rights. Secondly, and perhaps even more relevant in our present context, the task of locally promoting and protecting universally claimed human rights — i.e. the duty of human rights defenders and their network — appears specifically important when struggling to overcome afore-mentioned gaps in society.

If the commitment of human rights defenders favours the overcoming of — problematic — segregations, fragmentations while strengthening common ground (respect of human rights) it may seem just logical that a human rights network reduces conflicts etc. Yet, in real life of course it all depends on the methods. The best intention can lead to the worst outcome if not carried out in an appropriate manner. (As said above, "IS" is a kind of strong network too.) In this regard, we hope that our multilevel network approach facilitates ways of correcting and bettering human rights situations in the country. As much as human rights are supposed to reduce violence, RECODH aims at and hopefully succeeds in promoting peace.

Conclusions

To come back to the beginning: capacities of bridging or bonding, frequently referred to as social capital, is a capital with "two faces", as we have seen with the seemingly globally organised terrorists — that's why

there is the word of the "paradoxal power of social capital in creating and resolving conflict" (Michaelene Cox, Social Capital and Peace Building. Creating and resolving conflicts with trust and social networks, London/New York 2009, p. 2).

As we know from RECODH, human rights and peace work by network building brings about its own challenges but of course mainly it provides many advantages. Organisational strength is crucial and is facilitated by network alliances, as even general research shows investigating on networking and coordination between human rights activists: "African human rights organizations profit from meetings. They learn from each other, reducing the sense of isolation their leaders often experience" (Claude E. Welch, Protecting Human Rights in Africa. Strategies and Roles of Nongovernmental Organisations, Philadelphia 1995, p. 293, p. 297).

Supporters, members, friends, they all belong somehow to the network. Here, the decentralized RECODH has increased its social diversity as the activists differ and complement each other from region to region. This does not mean that there are no conflicts. However, *la vie associative (the association's daily life)* gains dynamics and space of action because of its growth at various levels.

Networking for peace: opportunities for the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict

*By Willemijn Verkoren**

Networks and peacebuilding

A network is 'a loosely structured form of cooperation, in which coordination is done through a horizontal exchange of information, lacking a clear hierarchy. It is composed of communication links between individuals or groups. The network notion stresses these linkages and allows participants to exchange information and attach meaning to it, thus transforming information into knowledge.' (Box 2001) The members of a network can be individuals or organisations that are working toward a common goal, or whose individual interests are better served within a collective structure. Networks are formed to extend the reach and influence of members and to gain access to sources of knowledge that could improve practice.

Complementarity is an important element of networks, which profit from the diversity of their constituencies and bring together their various strengths. This is necessary in order to deal with the fact that the field of peacebuilding has few resources to spend. Networks may ena-

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ble individual organisations to address global problems through joint action, based on the realisation that none of the organisations involved can address the issue at stake by itself. Such joint action may also strengthen the outreach capacity of the field as a whole. In this way, network participants can advance the work of their individual organisation and also promote the wider field of the network. Being a member of a network may thus add to an organisation's credibility and influence and lead to new business opportunities. On a less material level, networks may be sources of inspiration, solidarity, unity and moral support. In addition, collaboration in networks may expose organisations to new ideas and knowledge, enhance critical thinking and creativity, and help avoid competition and duplication of activities.

As an organisational form, networks provide more flexibility and openness than more formal organisations. This means that they are able to adjust in the process of cooperation. As a result, at least in theory, networks' structures can facilitate constant learning from success and failure. The light structure of networks may allow them to respond quickly to new situations and take new initiatives without going through a heavy bureaucratic process.

Increasingly, networks are considered to be particularly suitable to deal with issues of conflict and peace, as these issues have a dynamic nature and tend to link together players in different parts of the world, characteristics which appear to favour loose and flexible organisational forms that connect actors in different places. In addition, the field of conflict prevention and peacebuilding is dispersed over a great number of mostly small organizations, making knowledge sharing and cooperation important activities.

Factors that influence the success of networking may be placed in the following categories:

- *The capacity of the member organisations.* The participating organisations have the capacity to contribute meaningfully to a successful net-

work. They also have the capacity to learn and to use the network for some purpose. A successful network also contributes to the capacity building of its members. This helps to deal with issues of power and inequality, and ensures that members can get the most out of their participation in the network. The network also provides room for discussion and reflection upon actions. In addition, in a successful network, participants have time to engage in meaningful exchanges. It is also of importance that member organisations of a successful network represent a particular constituency, not merely their own organisational interests.

- *The relationship between members and the network.* A successful network has a clear added value for its members. There is a clear purpose; a shared vision and mission by all parties involved. From the outset, there is clarity about the aims, limits and possibilities of the network. Networks also require commitment on the part of those involved, because they require extra time besides the usual schedules of partners.

- *General characteristics of the network.* A successful network is flexible and capable of responding to changes in the environment. The network is also flexible in that room is created for self-organisation. There is an atmosphere of safety in which to express doubts and criticisms and manage uncertainties. There is trust among the members, as well as openness to different points of view, different values, and different interpretations of reality. In addition, a good network engages in joint activities.

- *Governance, legitimacy and organisation of the network.* A successful network is democratic and inclusive. It is not controlled by a single set of interests. Its structures are considered legitimate, and members have a sense of ownership. Successful networks strive to mitigate power issues. In addition, the role of the coordinator or secretariat

should be clearly circumscribed, active, and empowering. Having a strong and capable secretariat at all levels is of vital importance. Regular face-to-face meetings are important to build personal relationships and achieve continuity. Finally, a good network structure contributes to increased legitimacy and ownership and ensures both flexibility and good coordination.

- *Coverage and inclusiveness of the network*. A successful network strikes the right balance which has to be found between inclusiveness and diversity on the one hand, and focus and direction on the other. This goes for content as well as membership.

- *The content of the network*. A successful network does not strive to be an overall, comprehensive knowledge system, but aims to offer a stimulating framework that facilitates exchange and access to knowledge sources. Tacit as well as explicit knowledge is exchanged. There is sufficient focus in the context, but there is room for the discussion of diverse issues. Knowledge sharing may also generate 'common products'. Finally, a successful network pays attention to issues of language and translation in order to make available knowledge accessible to as many within the network as possible. This goes for language differences in the narrow sense of the term, but also applies to the use of jargon versus more accessible language.

- *The context of the network*. Any network should be linked in an appropriate way to a wider environment, to its social and political context as well as to neighbouring communities and similar initiatives in other countries or regions. At the same time, the network should not be embedded to the extent that it cannot operate autonomously. A successful network establishes links with other networks in order to prevent duplication and maximise knowledge benefits. More generally, a successful network operates in an enabling context. It is not obstructed by governments, conflict parties or other organisations.

- *The funding structure of the network.* There is sufficient funding for networking and knowledge sharing activities, even if the direct impact of these cannot always be shown. At the same time, the network is accountable financially. The funding structure of a good network does not provide a position of power to one organisation at the funding interface or enhance competition between members, but ensures that the funds benefit the network as a whole. Donor agencies do not impose particular approaches or activities. Donors engage in knowledge exchange with the network and take the knowledge generated in the network seriously, making use of it in their policy formulation.

- *Monitoring and evaluation.* A successful network has good and working monitoring and evaluation (M&E) procedures in order to assess impact and to continue to learn and improve practice.

1. Networks and networking

1.1 What are networks? Why networks?

A network is 'a loosely structured form of cooperation, in which coordination is done through a horizontal exchange of information, lacking a clear hierarchy. It is composed of communication links between individuals or groups. The network notion stresses these linkages and allows participants to exchange information and attach meaning to it, thus transforming information into knowledge.' (Box 2001) The members of a network can be individuals or organisations 'that are working toward a common goal, or whose individual interests are better served within a collective structure'. (Van Deventer 2004, 1) Networks are formed to extend the reach and influence of members and to gain access to sources of knowledge that could improve practice. They may exist locally, nationally, regionally or globally. Some observers consider networks to be particularly suitable to deal with issues of conflict and peace:

'Networks are becoming a favored organizational form wherever a broad operational field is involved (e.g. where links are being made between different regions, or between grassroot to international levels), where problems are so dynamic that rigid structures are not suitable, and where loose ties are preferable to formal organizational bonds. All these features are well known in areas of violent conflicts.' (Van Deventer 2004, 1–2)

A 2001 conference on lessons learned by peacebuilding practitioners formulated the importance of networking in the following way. The conference participants concluded that '[n]etworking has a large role to play in pulling together an expanding, but dispersed field', and went on to state that

'[t]he field of conflict prevention and peace building is expanding rapidly. […] However, the field is dispersed over a great number of mostly small organizations. In order to pull all these efforts together and identify gaps in the field, the sharing of information and co-operation is becoming more and more important. […] Networking can help to avoid a duplication of activities. Also, a broad network is the best guarantee against one-sided approaches to the complex issues involved in peacebuilding and conflict resolution.' (Galama and Van Tongeren 2002, 34)

Another advantage of networking (is) that it enables complementary partnerships, which are necessary in order to deal with the fact that the field of peacebuilding has few resources to spend (Galama and Van Tongeren 2002, 34). Other observers agree that complementarity is an important element of networks, which maintain and profit from the diversity of their constituencies (Benner et al. 2004, 197).

By networking, participants can advance the work of their individual organisation and also promote the wider field of the network. Collaboration in networks may expose organisations to new ideas and knowledge, enhance and deepen critical thinking and creativity, and

help avoid competition and duplication of activities. Networks may also enable individual organisations to address global problems through joint action, based on the realisation that none of the organisations involved can address the issue at stake by itself. Such joint action may also strengthen the outreach capacity of the field as a whole. (Åhäll 2006, 4–7; Galama and Van Tongeren 2002, 34; Benner et al. 2004, 196–197)

As an organisational form, networks provide more flexibility and openness than more formal organisations. This means that they are able to adjust in the process of cooperation. As a result, at least in theory, networks' structures can facilitate constant learning from success and failure. (Benner et al. 2004, 196)

Being a member of a network may also add to an organisation's credibility and influence and lead to new business opportunities. On a less material level, networks may be sources of inspiration, solidarity, unity and moral support. The light structure of networks may allow them to respond quickly to new situations and take new initiatives without going through a heavy bureaucratic process. (Åhäll 2006, 4–7; Galama and Van Tongeren 2002, 34; Benner et al., 196–197)

1.2 Categorising networks

A common type of network is a knowledge network. According to Stone, a knowledge network has two main functions: first, it coordinates the communication and dissemination of knowledge, acting as an intermediary between intellectual communities in different places. It provides 'a space for discussion, setting agendas and developing common visions regarding 'best practices', policy or business norms and standards'. This helps to avoid duplication of effort and synchronises 'communication codes'. This enables the network to speak with a collective voice, leading to its second main function: it can have a greater ability to 'attract media attention, political patronage and donor support than an individual or single organisation'. (Stone 2005, 93)

Research on knowledge networks has often focused on scientific networks. However, in practice, and particularly in the world of conflict and development, academia does not monopolise knowledge networks at all.

> '[F]or a variety of reasons — such as government cutbacks and funding formulas founded on tuition incomes — universities and their research institutes are rarely in the vanguard of identifying or prioritizing 'global issues'. Instead, major think tanks and leading NGOs with their own innovative policy departments […] are taking greater prominence […]. Hence, the growing salience of national to global knowledge and policy networks.' (Mbabazi, MacLean and Shaw 2005, 157)

Many networks however combine their knowledge exchange function with other, more action-oriented functions. In the field of peacebuilding this often means joint lobby and advocacy; research projects, or the joint fundraising for, and implementation of, programmes on the ground.

Networks can be categorised in various ways. The following dimensions will be elaborated in more detail in this section: the degree of cooperation and organisation; a network's focus and objective; issues related to coordination, ownership and accountability; and the level of network exclusiveness.

1.2.1 Organisation

One way to look at networks is along the dimension of the way networks are organised. Depending on their degree of cooperation, objectives, and history, networks may be organised in various ways. At one extreme of the organisational spectrum, an organisation may look like a spider web: a strong centralised network consisting of a central board and secretariat, surrounded by circles of members in various levels of involvement from full to partial membership. In this type of network the secretariat coordinates the exchange of knowledge and selects and

edits knowledge based on standards of quality and focus. Strong centralised networks are usually found in formalised environments in which sufficient means can be generated to pay for the relatively high coordination costs. They tend to be exclusive in that not everyone can become a member.

At the other extreme is the fish-net or cell-structured network, which often exists in informal societies or contexts that are threatening. Such a network is characterised by low organisation and coordination. It is inexpensive but it depends on the commitment and activity of its members. Most networks will fall somewhere in between these two forms. (Van Deventer 2004, 7–8)

1.2.2 Degree of cooperation, focus and objective[1]

Another way to distinguish between networks is to look at their activities and objectives: do they limit themselves to the knowledge exchange component or do they also aim to engage in common advocacy or even common project implementation? The degree of cooperation is often related to the activities the network engages in. Some activities, like joint lobbying or campaigning, require more cooperation and organisation than, for example, knowledge exchange.

The area of focus of a network is another facet which distinguishes one network from another. The content area on which a network focuses may be too narrow or too broad. If the area of discussion is too narrow:

- it will not stimulate a broad enough flow of information
- the interaction may be less creative since creative ideas often result from the combination of hitherto uncombined elements
- a too narrow content would only attract the 'usual suspects' who already know each other pretty well; little cross-fertilization would take place.

1 This section is based in part on an earlier publication by the author with Gerd Junne (Junne and Verkoren 2005).

If the subject matter is too broad ('Conditions for peace on earth'), however, then:

- the interaction remains too vague and becomes uninteresting for serious people,
- it attracts, on the contrary, people with lunatic ideas, and
- it becomes very difficult to arrive at common products which bind the group together.

Some networks have a very specific objective. They may have been created to prepare a specific event or the next annual report, to elaborate a new strategy, or to coordinate a specific project. 'Common products' could be joint publications containing lessons learned or recommendations, joint projects or programmes, the organisation of an event, a broadening of the community, or the start of a new one in a different field or region. Aiming for such a specific outcome can make a community more attractive and active, as participants feel they are working towards something concrete that will serve their interest. Being too specific about the intended outcome of the exchange, on the other hand, severely limits the creativeness of the process and the possibility for arriving at unexpected conclusions.

Networks working toward a specific outcome often function very well, because they have a clear focus, their activity is time-bound, and the participants have an obvious common interest. The problem is very often that the knowledge generated during the project is not captured and not passed on to future teams with a similar task. There is also little exchange with other teams that perform similar tasks at the same time. For such an exchange, the community should be broader, but as a consequence, the objective then becomes more diffuse.

To harness the great potential of project oriented task forces, it can be envisaged that a larger community organises itself as a task force which sets itself a series of challenging objectives with a specified time schedule. It can also accommodate different projects, carried out by different subgroups, at the same time.

Without a specific aim, interaction quickly becomes spurious. But with a too narrowly defined objective, a community may not survive its own success. It may fall apart once the aim has been realized, without making sure that the accumulated insight is passed on.

In some cases a common product is way beyond what a community aims to achieve. Many communities are created for the exchange of knowledge and experience per se. But there is always an implicit assumption that this exchange will lead to better results, if not through joint activity, then through the improved functioning of the individual participants who are enriched by the exchange.

Van Deventer draws attention to the fact that the two dimensions described so far — activities/objectives and organisation — are often interrelated. Networks formed with high expectations on the benefit side (ranging from merely gaining information to increasing the impact of activities, obtaining resources and gaining collective legitimacy) are likely to carry out more pro-active functions (ranging from knowledge exchange to advocacy and collective interventions) and, as a result, need a higher degree of institutional formalisation. (Ibidem, 6–7)

1.3 Conclusion

To conclude, networks can be quite different. Some limit themselves to knowledge exchange, while others are more action-oriented. Some have high levels of coordination and organisation, while others are more loose and informal. A network may be highly focused in terms of content, or be a platform for the exchange of just about anything.

Overall, networks are increasingly recognised as an important way to extend the reach and influence of organisations and to gain access to sources of knowledge that could improve practice. However, they are not always successful — far from it. Stone and Maxwell (2005, 1), for example, have concluded that 'access can be unequal, transaction costs high, and sustainability problematic'. The next section will address some of the obstacles that prevent networks from being efficient and effective.

2. Obstacles to overcome

In order for networks to function successfully, a number of important obstacles need to be overcome. This chapter looks at these obstacles. The chapter starts with a number of obstacles at the level of the individual organisation that is a member of a network in paragraph 2.1: organisational (learning) capacity; work pressure, time management and cost; organisational routine and structure; and work culture. In paragraph 2.2 some organisational issues at the level of the network are addressed: the role of the coordinating body; legitimacy, accountability and transparency; and exclusiveness. Paragraph 2.3 deals with power relations, competition, and contested knowledge inside the network. In paragraph 2.4, the place of the network in its wider context is discussed by looking at issues relating to embeddedness, regimes, and discourse. This includes a discussion of funding regimes, dominant discourse, and the issue of donor-driven projects. NGOs' local and political context is also addressed. Finally, paragraph 2.5 discusses cultural issues that may affect a network's functioning.

In addition to discussing challenges for networks, the chapter also pays attention to ways of overcoming these obstacles. Combined with the above discussion of ways to categorise networks, this will lead to a number of success factors for networks, which are formulated in chapter three of the paper.

2.1 Intra-organisational obstacles

This section discusses a number of obstacles to networking that lie within the borders of the organisations that participate in networks.

With regard to the knowledge exchange component of networks, the main intra-organisational obstacle is an organisation's learning capacity. Knowledge networking may function well, and organisational members may participate actively and come across useful new knowledge, but if the organisation's learning capacity is limited, so will be its abil-

ity to make use of this knowledge. Some of the conditions that promote organisational learning include space and time for interaction, reflection and discussion; an atmosphere of safety in which to discuss feelings, uncertainties and assumptions; organisational flexibility that leaves room for individual initiatives and experiments; and exposure to external parties and ideas. This section looks at the factors that make it difficult to achieve these conditions: organisational capacity, work and time pressures, organisational structure and work culture. These same factors also make it more difficult for organisations to successfully engage in other aspects of networks, such as joint activities beyond knowledge sharing.

2.1.1 Organisational capacity

Among Southern NGOs and grassroots organisations, the level of organisational capacity varies widely. Organisations with low capacity face a lack of funds, are understaffed, have a lack of skills, and have insufficient access to infrastructure such as the internet. Language issues also play a role, as does a lack of proficiency in 'technical' terminology. These issues present a serious obstacle for learning and knowledge exchange. For this reason, capacity building is an increasing priority among Northern and Southern players alike.

Networking can itself contribute to capacity building by making available tools, training and access to donors. The knowledge exchanged in a network might include information about whom to go to what, how to frame messages in order to draw attention, and how to raise funds. Where capacity of participants or potential participants is an issue, networks would do well to explicitly include the transfer of this kind of process knowledge. This includes the translation of documents into local languages and jargon-free versions[2] and building the learning capacity of participating organisations by raising awareness of the im-

2 The Central and Eastern African organisation Peace Tree Network (PTN) has begun to do this (source: conversation with Frederic Kama Kama, Peace Tree Network, Nairobi, 28 November 2005).

portance and requirements for learning and making available instruments for learning and M&E.

Intimately related to organisational capacity, funding is a big constraint for networking. The results of networking are long-term, indirect and difficult to measure, making donors reluctant to fund it given their emphasis on direct-impact, measurable activities.[3] In addition, the need for organisations to have a clear profile vis-à-vis donors limits their incentive to cooperate with others. More general financial constraints on the part of Southern NGOs lead to another challenge for networking: the loss of qualified personnel to better-paying international NGOs and government agencies, particularly after they have 'upped their value' through training. This is an issue that is mentioned again and again by local NGO staff. They plead for donors to make room for higher salary payments (which are usually considered as 'overhead' anyway by donors and often not funded) in order to retain staff.

2.1.2 Work pressure, time management and cost

An often-mentioned obstacle to networking is work pressure and a lack of time. NGO staff see the importance of networking and are willing in principle to engage in exchanges, but practical time issues often prevent them from doing so. This is problematic since time for reflection and interaction is one of the conditions that promote successful exchanges and learning.

The problem is compounded by the increasing emphasis by donors on 'direct-impact' activities. Things like networking and reflection are not considered to have a direct impact on development and peace and are thereby effectively discouraged. There is a pressure to limit overhead and minimalise resources not spent directly on projects. Particularly organisations that are dependent on project financing find that there is very little room to take a step back from the daily practice of project management and reflect on lessons learned.

3 Based on conversations with peacebuilders in Kenya, Ghana, Liberia, and Sierra Leone.

At the same time, as we saw above, attention to the importance of learning is increasingly recognised in the development field. This means that the staff of international NGOs face contradictory pressures: see table 3.

Table 3: Contradictory pressures on the staff of international aid agencies

EFFICIENCY	LEARNING
• Apply standard procedures • Concentrate on large scale projects • Keep gender, environmental etc. impacts in mind	• Adapt to local circumstances • React in a flexible way • Give local staff larger role • Take political situation into account • Show experimental attitude

Time is money, and networking and learning are often considered as an extra cost to the organisation: 'the more information is available, the more essential it is to have pathways through it via summaries […] [and] reviews. There is a major cost to this kind of editing.' (King 2005, 76) The same goes for the maintenance of regular cross-organisational contacts, participation in discussion meetings, and the like: they are time-intensive and therefore costly. Although it is recognised that the benefits from such an investment may well be worth the cost, these potential benefits are still vague and ambiguous. This is inevitable: the whole point of learning is that the outcome will be new and unknown.

The situation is compounded by the fact that for people working on conflict, there is always a sense of urgency and a need to respond to rapidly changing circumstances. In addition, the issues dealt with are often political in nature, adding politics to the pressures that bear upon staff members and managers. More so than in the private sector, the work of managers in the public sector, be it governments or NGOs, is to a large extent politics-and incident-driven (Noordergraaf 2000, 262).

To an extent, these obstacles are such that they will never be fully removed. However, two types of efforts could help limit them. The first

is working to gain recognition of the fact that in the long term, learning and efficiency are not contrary but mutually beneficial. Lobbying donors with this message could be one important step in the right direction. The second effort is trying to devise organisational structures that limit these problems and stimulate learning. The next section will pay attention to this.

2.1.3 Organisational routine and structure

An often-heard obstacle to knowledge sharing is work pressure and a lack of time. Added to this is the fact that networking is usually not the core activity of organisations involved in networks. As a result, they are likely to prioritise other activities (Åhäll 2006, 19). A solution that has been suggested is for knowledge sharing to be 'included in the normal policy cycle and integrated into the regular work schedule.' (Hivos 2003, 4) How can this be achieved?

For one thing, making contributions to networking and learning could be made part of job descriptions and performance appraisals. A recent *Economist* publication about innovation puts it as follows: 'It is not enough to have original thinking. It must be recognised, valued and put into practice. […] A lack of innovation usually indicates that managers at all levels lack the awareness or motivation to spot the potential of the ideas floating around their organisation. They may see original thinking as a threat and therefore discourage it.' (Syrett and Lammiman 2002, 37–38)

As characteristics of an innovative organisation the *Economist* publication mentions a diverse workforce, opportunities for casual exchanges, and an encouragement to share information. These facets should be reflected in personnel policy as well as the shaping of organisational structure and routines. Overall, organisational flexibility is vital: management needs to be open to changes in direction as a result of learning and suggestions from staff. In the present field of analysis, this bears also upon the donors: demands for rigid planning and strictly holding aid recipients to their earlier plans can limit flexibility and learning.

Regular exposure to external parties and ideas could also be integrated into work routines. Opportunities for the training of staff could be increased and they might be encouraged to engage in action research. In addition, exchanges with academics, policy makers and representatives of other organisations could be facilitated.

2.1.4 Work culture

Structural changes cannot be the whole story. At least as important is an organisation's work culture: rules, habits, consultation styles, language, communication, the use of symbols, and definitions of reality (Boonstra 2004, 3). Adjustments to organisational routines can create space for changes in work culture, but it is these latter changes that eventually make the difference. 'Research […] provides further support for an emphasis that is less on devising management systems to 'control' learning or to 'manage' knowledge, more on finding new ways to encourage people to think creatively and feed their thoughts back into the organisation' (Kessels and Harrison 2004, 2). Changing culture is difficult, however. Uncertainty and a resistance to change are a facet of every organisational member. People desire certainty and stability, and fear the unknown (Boonstra 2004, 4).

As we saw above, a culture that stimulates learning is one that fosters an atmosphere of safety in which to discuss feelings, uncertainties and assumptions. A culture of cooperation and exchange, rather than one of competition, contributes to this. Trust is a central concept: without trust, people will be unwilling to share doubts, question assumptions, and make innovative suggestions. There may also be a fear that openness will be taken advantage of by intra-organisational competitors. To put it differently, free speech is a basic precondition for sharing knowledge and learning. Trust, a cooperative culture, the rewarding of knowledge sharing, and an atmosphere tolerant of mistakes are a part of this (Sauquet 2004, 382–3).

2.2 Difficulties with regard to the organisation of the network

2.2.1 The role of the coordinating body

A coordinating party is required for a network to function well. This can range from one person spending a few hours a week on the network to an entire fulltime network secretariat. The coordinating party moderates online interaction, processes information, and facilitates direct contact between members by putting them in touch with each other and by organising face-to-face meetings. In more action-oriented networks, coordinators may also raise funds for the network, initiate common programmes, and take the lead in lobby and advocacy.

The role of the coordinator is crucial. A network needs one or more persons who feel a special responsibility about the forum which they have joined or created, who facilitate exchange, organise events, and start discussions on governance matters where necessary. At the same time, the role of the coordinating body or secretariat can also be problematic. First of all, financing a secretariat is often difficult, because donors are often unwilling to provide anything other than project funding. In addition, it often happens that a secretariat has difficulty finding the right balance between the interests of the network members and their own organisational interest. For example, a secretariat may be tempted to use funds attracted for the network to implement its own programmes. Another issue may be that an organisation acting as secretariat fears losing its profile vis-à-vis donors and other potential partners, as NGOs are under continuous pressure to demonstrate their unique contribution to the field. (Galama and Van Tongeren 2002, 35)

The selection of a coordinator can also present problems. There may be competition over this position, particularly when the coordinating party is also the recipient of external funds for the network. Experience shows that the NGO selected to coordinate the network acquires a power position from being the recipient of donor funds for the network. This can have an adverse effect: the coordinating NGO may be reluctant to jeopardise its newfound power and start monopolising

rather than sharing knowledge as a result. More generally, the position of power that individuals and organisations derive from being at the funding interface is recognised by practitioners[4] and researchers (Hilhorst 2003) alike. This makes democratic governance of networks a priority — but not always a reality.

2.2.2 Legitimacy, transparency and accountability

This leads us to more general questions of power and domination (see also the sections on power and discourse below). When a network is analysed, the question of who dominates it — and what that means for the character of the knowledge that is exchanged, the granting of access to potential members, and the use the network has for participants — cannot be ignored. Networks can be Northern dominated and donor-driven, but they can also come into existence from the bottom up, as a result of Southern organisations coming together to meet a shared need. As one donor representative pointed out in a conversation, donor-initiated is not necessarily the same as donor-driven; what matters is who sets the agenda. Indeed, some donor-initiated networks are perceived to be very useful by the participants[5].

Related to coordination and ownership is the issue of accountability. Because networks are relatively fluid and consist of many different actors, it is difficult to hold them accountable for their actions and the way they use the resources of donors and participants. In other words, 'networks as diffuse, complex and weakly institutionalized collaborative systems are neither directly accountable to an electoral base nor do they exhibit clear principal-agent relationships. Therefore two traditional mechanisms of accountability are not applicable in networks: electoral accountability and hierarchical accountability'. (Benner et al. 2004, 198)

Nevertheless, networks do devise their own mechanisms of accountability. Often they introduce democratic elements, electing representa-

4 Based on conversations with researchers and practitioners.

5 Such as the ICCO partner network in Liberia.

tive bodies of governance. Codes of conduct or constitutions are sometimes developed. Financially, networks are usually accountable to donor organisations that demand transparent practice and reporting. In many cases, the coordinating organisation is asked to conduct monitoring and evaluation, but the way this is carried out still depends on the cooperation of the partners.

A related issue is legitimacy. Many networks face internal and external discussions on the legitimacy of the network's leadership and representative structures. Sometimes, the way in which representatives are selected is subject to criticism. Network secretariats' position at the interface of the internal network and external stakeholders presents them with more general issues of legitimacy and representation as well. On the one hand they represent the interests of their members; on the other, they strive to maintain a particular reputation externally.

The West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) can serve as an example: it consists of a number of national networks. These networks lend the WANEP secretariat its legitimacy and the secretariat exists to support them. However, the secretariat also demands a certain measure of quality from the national networks in order to maintain its reputation and retain donors. The national networks on their part obtain legitimacy from being a part of the wider WANEP network. Ensuring quality is something they have to do in return for this. The WANEP secretariat is constantly struggling to find the right balance between maintaining the autonomy of the national networks and ensuring a bottom-up decision making structure on the one hand — and making sure that the national networks live up to the quality standards and principles of WANEP on the other.[6] The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) of which WANEP is a part faces similar issues at the global level.[7]

6 Based on interviews with WANEP members in Ghana, Liberia, and Sierra Leone, February 2006.

7 Based on a conversation with ECCP staff members on 25 April 2006.

2.2.3 Exclusiveness

A related dimension is network exclusiveness. An issue that has been raised with regard to networking initiatives is that many of them have been too exclusive. Often, for example, they have not crossed the North-South border. According to King many development agencies have been more concerned with 'improving their own capacity rather than with improving the quality of engagement with the South'. The first circle of sharing is usually within the organisation, the second is with other players in the North, and only third are the Southern partners and other groups outside the North:

> 'It could be suggested that the new assumptions of 'genuine partnership' between North and South would have made it mandatory to start the explorations of knowledge sharing with the primary actors in the so-called recipient countries. […] [Instead,] a good deal of the initial knowledge management and knowledge sharing in the agencies has actually taken place behind the protection of an intranet, reinforcing the view that it is the agency's own staff development that is the primary objective.' (King 2005, 72–75).

Even when networks do cross the North-South border, or when they are South-South networks, exclusiveness can be an issue. Unequal access by different parties who could benefit and contribute may be the result of different organisational capacities, including time issues but also things like access to internet. It may also be a consequence of politics, particularly in conflict areas where some organisations or individuals may not want to engage with others because they are considered to be allied with one or another of the conflict parties.

Inclusiveness and the broadening of a network are not necessarily positive, however. There is a balance that needs to be found. One needs a certain critical mass to start a lively, sustained interaction, and it is undesirable to exclude important actors — but the group of people which is brought together can be too large as well as too small. If the group is too small, the chance is great that:

- There will be little exchange, because there are too few people to participate. Participants' positions will be quickly known to each other and no longer surprising, so the advantage of participating will rapidly decline.
- If only people with a similar background participate, opinions may not differ sufficiently to generate creative ideas.
- If only a small fraction of the potential constituency participates, people will turn to other fora where these people do meet.
- Importantly, the network may lose legitimacy due to unequal access. (Junne and Verkoren 2005)

On the other hand, the community can also be too inclusive. By asking too many people with different backgrounds to join, communication could falter. The reasons are that:

- Chances increase that individual contributions are beyond the interest of the majority of members;
- People hesitate to engage themselves because they do not see a common denominator which brings participants together;
- The larger number of people may generate so many messages that they will no longer be read by the other members of a community. A community would then drown in its own flow of information, if not skilfully channelled into different subgroups and discussion threads. (Junne and Verkoren 2005)

The issue of exclusiveness also relates to the extent to which a network provides access to other networks. If a Southern, grassroots network is able to link up with international, often donor-driven networks, then this can be a vital function for its members.

2.3 Power relations, competition, and contested knowledge

Power issues can present another set of obstacles to networking. The workings of networks may be limited by people possessing political power, who feel threatened by the network. This can be because of the network's independent links to donors and other external groups, which run counter to a government's desire to monopolise such connections. Power may also be exercised by donors who impose conditions upon recipients and thereby determine the course adopted by a network.

As we saw above, individuals or organisations than are assigned to coordinate a network and receive funding to do so also obtain a power position. Powerful actors may also support and strengthen networking initiatives, and networks often aim to influence the agendas of those holding power actors in order to get their objectives met. Networks may themselves be 'empowered' by gaining access to policy channels or by building their capacity to act more effectively.

The possession of knowledge itself also constitutes power. McNeill (2005, 57–58) writes that 'inter-institutional rivalry is common within the multilateral system, and institutions gain international prestige partly by having good ideas. Ideas are thus an important source of power.' He gives as an example the extent to which the economics discipline combined with multilateral institutions such as the World Bank acquire both the power of ideas and the power over ideas. This happens through the *framing* of the discussion in an economic discourse. 'An effective frame is one that makes favoured ideas seem like common sense, while unfavoured ideas are unthinkable' (McNeill 2005, 58).

For knowledge to provide power, it needs to be the kind of knowledge that is desired by others: translatable and useful. The need to make knowledge translatable and accessible is the reason why its packaging is important. In the words of Ivanov (1997), 'the importance of the players in global and even regional networks depends primarily on their ability to provide an essentially *local* knowledge input to policy formulation

and implementation, but in such form as to make it compatible with the dominant networking discourse' (emphasis in original). The risk of this is that all network participants will end up adopting the dominant terminology and rhetoric irrespective of their perspective, leading to a 'sterile globalistic cosmopolitanism, which leaves no room for multifaceted vision of the community discourse, making it utterly biased in relation to the resolution of practical problems.'

Power also produces and influences knowledge. Those who possess power determine to a large extent what is considered true. Dominant discourse coalitions or hegemonic projects exercise the power to impose their definitions and interpretations of reality upon others. In the words of Hardy and Phillips (2002, 10),

> 'actors exercise power by 'fixing the [..] meanings that create a particular reality and by articulating meaning in ways that legitimate their particular views as 'natural' and 'inevitable'; link the actions and preferences of other actors to the achievement of their interests; and make particular socially constructed structures take on a neutral and objective appearance.'

Some network participants may be more vocal, or have better developed positions, than others, and therefore influence the course of action that a network adopts. Particularly when such groups form a coalition with other influential players, they may succeed in imposing their discourse on the community.

What arises from this is that those who have the capacity, means, experience, and legitimacy to impose their preferred solution upon others determine to a large extent what happens in a network. In general, Northern participants will be better positioned to do so than Southern participants, and better-funded actors will be more likely to have power than less well-off ones. This means that opportunities to get the most out of knowledge networks are unequal. To understand a network it is important to take this dimension into account by putting the network in its political and cultural context (see the next section) and

by asking questions like: 'who benefits from the network?' and 'who is seeking to influence the network?'.

Competition among civil society groups plays a role as well. It has the effect of constraining knowledge exchange initiatives, as it may lead to unwillingness to share for fear of giving away one's competitive advantages. The will to work together, and the acknowledgement that networking is important, is not always there. Within networks competition over sources of funds often plays a role, as does a fear of losing one's profile.

In situations of conflict transformation, even more so that in 'normal' circumstances, knowledge is never uncontested. Post-conflict development involves not only 'technical' questions but certainly also political ones. The analysis of the conflict that lies at the basis of proposed solutions will be different depending on the allegiances of the analyst. This insight relates to the concept of 'discourse coalitions' that we saw in part one of this paper. Different groups are continuously at odds with each other, trying to impose their own understanding of the situation on others. When one discourse coalition becomes dominant it can be understood as a hegemonic project.

Contested knowledge can present a severe obstacle to successful exchange and networking. On the other hand, it may also lead to fruitful discussions about the different points of view. The network could then function as a forum for dialogue as well as of exchange. Whether this occurs depends on the willingness of the participants to open up to other points of views and on the skill of the coordinator to guide the discussion in the right direction. It may be necessary to start off by simply acknowledging and comparing the different understandings of reality of the participants[8], before any further interaction can be undertaken.

8 The Split Screen project of the Network University is an example of this. The project facilitated an online process involving Netherlands-based Palestinian and Jewish youth who compared their different interpretations of the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. (http://www.netuni.nl/splitscreen/)

2.4 Embeddedness, regimes, and discourse

Any network should be linked in an appropriate way to a wider environment, to neighbouring communities and similar initiatives in other countries or regions. If this is not the case, a network remains quite isolated. Insights generated in similar networks might not be taken into account, resources will not be pooled, results cannot be compared, and ideas will remain less widespread. Moreover, the chance that insights generated or transferred in the network will actually be used by policymakers or practitioners will be limited. On the other hand it is also possible that a network is too embedded in one particular region, political stream, discourse community, regime or hegemonic project, in which case it loses credibility and becomes part of a political project rather than a more neutral vehicle for knowledge exchange between participants from different backgrounds and with different points of view.

Although not much has been written about the embeddedness of networks, the literature on NGO embeddedness provides some insight into the issue, particularly considering the fact that NGOs are crucial participants in knowledge exchange networks in the field of peacebuilding. The literature on the embeddedness of NGOs has focused particularly on the funding regimes and discourse coalitions of which they are a part.

2.4.1 Funding regimes

'Follow the money', informant *Deep Throat* said in the film *All the President's Men* in order to point journalist Bob Woodward, who was about to uncover the Watergate scandal, in the right direction. The quote is often used to signify that whoever has control of the resources determines to a large extent what takes place: not only the direction of policy and practice, but also working methods and even the language that is used. In the business of development and peacebuilding, it is the donors who dominate the working environment. A term that is often used in this context is 'funding regime'.

A regime is a set of 'implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules and decision-making procedures around which actors' expectations converge' (Keohane 1991, 108). These norms, rules and procedures prescribe certain actions and imply obligations — even though these obligations are not necessarily legally enforceable. (Keohane 1991, 110) The norms, rules and procedures in funding regimes are created and maintained largely by the actors that subsidise NGOs: state ministries, multilateral funding agencies, and intermediate agencies such as large Northern NGOs that themselves receive donor money and pass this on to Southern partner NGOs.

Over the past decades there has been a trend for donor money to be increasingly channelled through NGOs rather than through governments in developing countries. Co-financing schemes were implemented in which large Northern NGOs became vehicles for spending donor money in cooperation with partner NGOs in the South. This profoundly changed the position of NGOs vis-à-vis the state.

In addition, NGOs face an increasing need for resources due to the internationalisation of the field and the rapid growth of the number of NGOs and other agents operating in the market, such as consultancy firms. Competition for funds becomes stronger. As a result, NGOs have begun adopting business-like practices and professionalized staff and operations, sometimes at the expense of their content and autonomy. This loss of independence is compounded by the forced adjustment to the policies and conditions of resource holders. (Krieger 2004)

As a result of these developments, observers began to discern a new closeness between funding agencies and NGOs. Already in 1996, Edwards and Hulme identified funding regimes as a threat to NGOs independence in an article entitled 'Too Close for Comfort?', noting that official funding was becoming increasingly important for NGOs, and fearing that this would politicise them (Edwards and Hulme 1996). Government funding appears to have come with increased conditionality, forcing NGOs to work in particular countries and demanding

an increased focus in poverty impact — at the expense of other social change goals (Mitlin et al. 2005, 2).

The trend of increasing embeddedness of NGOs in funding regimes may also lead to a development where NGOs that were focused idealistically towards the achievement of a particular societal goal, even if this meant engaging in political opposition and advocacy, become less political and more opportunistic, doing whatever donors are willing to fund in order to secure the continuation of their organisation. Indeed, most observers agree that NGOs have grown more distant from social movements as they became closer to government agencies as a result of their increased dependence on official subsidies. From organisations working for social change they become project deliverers for donors. As a result NGOs may become less pronounced and more similar to one another. Rather than political actors with their own social agendas, they become donor subcontractors.

In addition, official donors increasingly emphasise direct-impact activities at the expense of NGO performance in areas like institutional development and advocacy (Edwards and Hulme 1996). In the words of Britton (2005, 6),

> '[d]onors, whilst increasingly requiring evidence of impact and learning, still use the delivery of outputs and financial probity as the bottom line measure for their 'return on investment'. Most donors require the use of the Logical Framework Approach (LFA) as a planning framework and there is significant evidence that this acts as a constraint to learning at least at the project and programme level. The constant pressure for NGOs to demonstrate results generates an understandable concern about publicising or even sharing lessons learned and programme experience.'

This is also related to the competition for funding:

> 'The reluctance to be open about learning may be particularly strong where a programme has not achieved what was promised in funding applications for fear of the repercussions that may result.'

This trend towards demanding concrete, measurable results appears to have continued in the years that followed, making the work of NGOs engaged in peacebuilding, which is often hard to quantify, more difficult. It also potentially makes networking difficult because this type of activity is also difficult to measure.

A related issue that is mentioned by the staff of Southern NGOs is a dependency on short-term funding. Donor funds are often tied to time-bound projects with specific objectives. Activities like reflection, discussion, networking, and improving organisational capacities for long-term M&E and learning are often not part of these projects. They are considered 'overhead' and are often not financed.

2.4.2 Discourse

As was mentioned above in this paper, discourse plays an important role in networking. 'By privileging certain visions of society and discarding others, discourses frame and construct certain possibilities for thought and subsequent action' (Van Grasdorff 2005, 31). Discourse becomes dominant through a combination of *coercion* (peer pressure, wanting to remain part of a group), *conviction* (people find the discourse convincing), and *seduction* (it is attractive for people to be part of the discourse coalition). (Hilhorst 2003, 75)

These elements of conviction and seduction characterise the interaction among researchers, national donors, multilateral donors, politicians, and NGOs that has led to the rise of a particular 'development' discourse. The background of the discourse of 'development' is formed by the idea that 'social change occurs according to a pre-established pattern, the logic and direction of which are known', and that the West is leading the way in this evolutionary process, 'exhibiting the most advanced stance of human perfectability' (Van Grasdorff 2005, 34)[9]. This discourse has been adopted by funding agencies and become part of funding regimes. It is characterised by a specific language, in which

9 An interesting description of the invention and spread of this concept is provided by Eric Von Grasdorff (2005, 42-47).

concepts like 'development', 'empowerment' and 'ownership', but also 'accountability', 'output' and impact', figure prominently.

One possible consequence of this dominant discourse is that it hides the political nature of development activities by casting them in a neutral, technical language. Development interventions inherently lead to social and political change, both intentionally and unintentionally, but this facet of development is obscured by the use of seemingly technical terms. This development is what Ferguson calls the 'anti-politics machine' (Ferguson 1994). By way of illustration, Mitlin et al. (2005, 13) note that where NGO staff in the 1970s and 1980s were well familiar with the radical writings of Paulo Freire and Ivan Illich, writers who focused on underlying structures of oppression, today the bookshelves in NGO offices often display more sector-specific, less political and more technical texts.

As a result of their embeddedness in funding regimes, NGOs are less able to put forward alternative discourses, and concerns grow that 'becoming public service contractors […] [is] tying NGOs into mainstream approaches to a greater extent than ever before' (Mitlin et al. 2005, 8). Recent trends in these mainstream discourses and approaches include the increasing dominance of the neoliberal agenda, the hegemony of the poverty reduction agenda in international aid, and most recently the prominence security agenda and attempts to tie it to the poverty agenda. (Mitlin et al. 2005, 8–12)

When one hears representatives of Southern grassroots organisations speak, their fluency in the discourse of development is sometimes striking. To explain why they have adopted it, one merely has to 'follow the money'. It is the language of the donors, and to qualify for funding local actors have to use it in funding proposals, in monitoring reports, and at partner conferences. Thus, the adoption of 'development speak' has a strategic undertone (Hilhorst 2003, 57). More generally, dominant discourses reflect the gap between North and South in terms of knowledge generation. Most of the well-resourced institutes and well-trained researchers are in the North and many members of Southern elites

study there, making it inevitable that much of the discourse is driven by Northern perspectives and perceptions. Writing about Africa, Van Grasdorff (2005, 50–54) notes that the debt crisis and structural adjustment programmes starting in the 1980s have cut off funding for African universities and publication structures, and describes how this combined with a Western control of media lead to a 're-colonisation' of knowledge transmission, production and dissemination.

In addition to the general phenomenon of 'development' discourse, donors also impose more particular discourse trends, often following the political preferences of the moment. To Southern actors it is usually known that particular donors have certain preferences, and in anticipation of this, fund-seeking organisations frame activities in a particular way in their funding applications.

One example in the peacebuilding field is what has been called the 'securitisation' of peacebuilding and postconflict development. Since September 11, 2001, there is an increasing emphasis on security at the expense of other facets of peacebuilding work. Like the 'development' discourse, this is directly related to funding regimes; the discourse shapes and is shaped by the activities that donors are willing to fund. Within the field of peacebuilding US and other Western donors have shifted their focus towards activities like security sector reform, at the expense of other initiatives. Southern organisations argue that security sector reform can only be addressed if the underlying issues that cause the insecurity in the first place are dealt with as well — if not, then it can even strengthen authoritarian regimes. The same is true for disarmament: people carry arms because they feel insecure; disarming them doesn't solve the whole problem. These arguments are now not usually taken up.[10]

At the same time, local actors do have a role to play in the use and the shaping of discourse. Discourses get reinterpreted at the local level, at the interface with other discourses that exist locally and internationally, drawing together fragments from both modernity and tradition. Local

10 Based on a conversation with Ms. Jebiwott Sumbeiyo (programme officer), Africa Peace Forum (APFO), in Nairobi on 29 November 2005.

actors master multiple development notions and use them for their own ends. They 'reshuffle, circumvent, and accommodate' discourses (Hilhorst 2003, 81).

NGO leaders, through whom development activities and funding enter a locality, are often the actors that find themselves at the interface of international and local discourses. In that capacity they function as 'brokers of meaning', mediating between different knowledge systems. (Hilhorst 2003, 189-191) These actors also derive power from the knowledge of international discourse, seeking to make parties dependent on their brokerage services and being able to manipulate development discourse to fit their own local political agendas. (Hilhorst 2003, 100)

Discourses, then, are used and reproduced both unintentionally and intentionally. What is important about this is that in both cases they shape reality in a very direct way. Discourses have unintended consequences for 'confirming, accelerating or altering social change' […]. It is through actors' use of multiple discourses that social patterns are negotiated, power distributed and development shaped'. (Hilhorst 2003, 100–101)

2.4.3 Donor-driven projects

Of course, the discourse that dominates relates to the activities that are predominantly carried out. Northern-dominated discourse goes hand in hand with donor-driven projects. According to Southern NGO staff interviewed by the author, donors often announce 'we have money for this and that', instead of asking 'what is needed'. This ties organisations down. They are in no position to turn down money and thus have to go along. As a result, structures are created that are not used because the community was not involved in them. This reflects a lack of recognition of insider expertise. External experts are brought in that do not really understand the situation. Often they miscalculate, assume, generalise, or do not know the local context. The analysis of people on the ground is often not taken seriously, in part because they do not have university degrees. When a donor-financed programme is evaluated, donors usu-

ally do not look for an expert within the country, someone who knows the terrain, implications, practices, and (political) obstacles, and who might as a result use the right indicators to determine success or failure. An external evaluator once asked why staff did not commute more between regions, showing a complete lack of understanding for the condition of infrastructure.

Someone who is thoroughly familiar with a situation will feel when change begins to occur. This may not always be tangible and will go unnoticed by external observers, and donors' reporting formats usually do not capture it. NGO staff nonetheless try to translate these kinds of changes into the necessary format, but part of the knowledge gets lost in the translation process.

According to some Southern NGO staff, donors condition local counterparts to say what the donors want to hear. For example, when they talk of capacity building they first tell you what it is not, according to them: salaries, offices, and vehicles. So all you can then ask for is training, which is what they want you to ask for. When you bring up the need for a vehicle they treat you as being selfish. They do not understand that it is a basic necessity in a country without reliable public transport. It is not just the direct counterparts that cause this but the whole financing system from governments via Western NGOs. Priorities and assumptions are passed on. Donors should come in with an open mind to understand the situation and needs.

Southern partners are also sometimes to blame, for taking the easy road of saying what the donors want to hear in the hope of getting their money. Or they simply take donors' claims for granted and do not study the situation themselves. According to Southern NGO workers, their colleagues should be more assertive in making clear what is wrong with donor's demands. They sometimes have to be strong to resist donor policy preferences. A thorough knowledge of the community provides such strength as it makes arguments better-founded and convincing.

One reason why Southern NGOs are not more assertive may be, in the words of Mawdsley et al., 'a deep lack of self-confidence within

Southern NGOs, inhibiting them from advancing their own agenda more openly and positively.' They suggest that this may be explained by 'older colonial and postcolonial/developmentalist hierarchies, and the systematic ways in which Northern, 'formal' (scientific and management) ideas have been privileged over local ways of seeing and doing things.' Formal, documented, and scientifically tested knowledge has been presented to Southern actors as the new definition of 'legitimate' knowledge, discarding more traditional types of knowledge. Mawdsley et al. add that the lack of self-confidence of Southern NGOs 'also reflects the relative lack of access that Southern NGOs have to certain forms of information and knowledge, such as university research.' (2002, 12–13)

Another problem may be that some NGOs have little interest in challenging the accepted wisdom. According to Mawdsley et al (2002, 12–13), many of them were created not out of a particular need or ideology but in response to funds becoming available in the 1980s and 1990s. As a result they do not have a particular agenda to advance, apart from self-preservation, and 'acquiesce to working only or mainly at their paymasters rather than their clients demand'. As a result, 'Northern NGOs may be committed to listening to their Southern partners, and through them to the voices of the poor, but many of their Southern partners are prepared to tell them whatever they want to hear.' (ibidem, 5)

An additional factor that may play a role in the domination of Northern discourse and priorities is the 'professionalisation' of Southern partners: '[a]s Northern NGOs have withdrawn from their previous levels of direct development work, and the number of Southern NGOs has exploded, they have had to find appropriate ways of working together. This has tended to mean that these Southern NGOs have to conform to certain organisational practices' (ibidem, 15). These practices include financial accounting procedures and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems. Such procedures demand time and skills, and are often considered by Southern NGOs to be inappropriate — this is particularly true for the demand for direct and measurable impact in M&E and reporting. All this leads Southern NGOs to attracting and building technical

knowledge (ICT, Western management procedures, financial accounting, English language skills, development jargon) at the expense of local knowledge. (ibidem, 17–18)

2.4.4 NGOs' local and political context

NGOs are 'both *part of* and partially *apart from* broader processes of development'. They should 'always be understood in terms of their relationships to the state and market, as well as by historical changes *within* civil society, such as processes of citizenship formation and new/declining forms of popular mobilization' (Miltlin et al. 2005, 3 and 4, original emphasis).

NGOs are involved in interventions to change societies, but they are also part of those societies. Their actions have intentional and unintentional consequences for the context in which they operate — and vice versa. Hilhorst writes that 'everything happening in and around NGOs has a bearing on the politics of power within the organizations, the politics of organizational legitimation and, finally, the politics of (local and global) development.' (Hilhorst 2003, 4)

Local actors' room for manoeuvre, or the social space available to them to fulfil their projects, is restricted by the presence of other actors in development. It is also limited by the memory of previous interventions, which shapes the scope of actors' demands and aims. Associational patterns also play a role: state-society-NGO relations make up the context of NGOs' actions. Family standing and tribal affiliation often cut across and determine these relations. Finally, NGOs are fitted into local politics; local constituents shape NGOs' identity and goals. All this modifies the idea of a linear, step-by-step policy and implementation model: in reality actions are shaped by personal perspectives, social relations, and everyday politics. (Hilhorst 106–119)

Achieving an active interplay between groups and organisations is difficult in conflict areas due to high levels of mistrust between groups and individuals. In addition, such regions are often plagued by a scarcity of resources, low security and weak or bad governance, none of

which provides an enabling environment for networking. Fear may prevent people from speaking freely, and practical issues such as low internet connectivity and bad physical infrastructure limit exchanges.

Next to that, people working in war-torn areas often have a high sense of urgency and work overload, and a tendency to engage only in 'direct impact' activities. It is perceived that the people need to see a 'peace dividend' in the form of direct physical progress in order to build support for peacebuilding processes. Networking activities appear to be of secondary importance. Nonetheless, local NGO workers recognise the importance of learning from own experience as well as knowledge and lessons from other places, and the added strength that linking up with other organisations can provide.

Capacity building is a central strategy towards improving the context for networking in conflict-affected parts of the world. Improve the learning and working capacity of Southern organisations and individuals will upgrade their position as full-scale participants in networks. Networks themselves can play an important role in this capacity building exercise. Better developed participants can share their experience and assist others as they develop their capacity.

2.5 Cultural issues

Following from the view of knowledge networks as discourse communities or hegemonic projects is the recognition that the world has dominant and less dominant knowledge systems. Knowledge is power and, since the 'North' or the 'West' are politically and economically dominant, their concepts of knowledge dominate as well. Perhaps networks by their very nature emphasise 'Western', rationalistic knowledge over other types of knowledge:

> 'the expansion of knowledge networks as 'sites of authority' potentially accelerates 'normalisation of the dominant discourses of power' [Rai 2005]. Networks systematise knowledge generated by diverse individual and organisational knowledge actors and im-

> pose a rationality that gives precedence to a particular conception of knowledge — usually of a codified, technocratic, secular, westernised society. Participation is informally restricted through boundary drawing discourses by the network to exclude or devalue indigenous knowledge that does not conform to techno-scientific criteria.' (Stone 2005, 99)

It is important to recognise this. Efforts to exchange tacit knowledge through direct interaction might be less prone to this type of rationalisation. However, such exchanges will be very difficult across cultures as there is less of a shared context that makes the tacit knowledge explainable and understandable. More generally, expectations and realities of knowledge and information sharing are likely to be very different in different circumstances and cultural settings:

> 'In some situations where specialist knowledge is a very scarce commodity, there may well be strong temptations to retain rather than share. In other settings, where age is an important marker of status, hopes of knowledge networking across the boundaries of seniority may prove to be naive […]. Equally in civil service structures, such as Japan's, where the generalist is regarded more highly than the specialist professional or technical personnel, it may also be problematic to install a culture of networking and knowledge sharing.' (King 2005, 75)

These and other cultural issues are impossible to resolve entirely, but it helps to recognise them and make them explicit during exchanges.

2.6 Conclusion

The obstacles to successful networking are numerous. However, this chapter has attempted to not only describe the obstacles but also give suggested solutions. These suggestions will not remove the obstacles entirely, but they might make them easier to deal with. More generally,

it is important that networks make the obstacles explicit and take them into account in their design and mode of operation.

3. Success factors and networking lessons learned

Based on the ideas presented so far, the following factors that have a bearing on the success of networking can be identified. They are to be understood as general lessons learned about networks.

Capacity of the member organisations

- The **participating organisations have the capacity** to contribute meaningfully to a successful network. They also have the capacity to learn and to use the network for some purpose. They are able to apply the knowledge gained from network participation in their own work. This requires both a will and space to change work methods and try new things. The members also have a work culture that stimulates learning. The network supports learning processes within member organisations.

- More generally, a successful network contributes to the **capacity building** of its members. This helps to deal with issues of power and inequality, and ensures that members can get the most out of their participation in the network. The network also provides **room for discussion and reflection** upon actions.

- In a successful network, participants have **time** to engage in meaningful exchanges.

- Member organisations of a successful network represent a particular **constituency**, not merely their own organisational interests.

Relationship between the member organisations and the network

- A successful network has a clear **added value** for its members. The membership has a **need** for the network and participants are motivated to participate actively. The network does not exist in isolation but has sustainable links to activities carried out in reality.

- There is a clear **purpose**; a shared vision and mission by all parties involved. This has been translated into a clear set of objectives. Without a specific aim, interaction quickly becomes spurious. However, with a too narrowly defined objective, a community may not survive its own success. It may fall apart once the aim has been realised, without making sure that the accumulated insight is passed on.

- From the outset, there is **clarity** about the aims, limits and possibilities of the network. There has been sufficient discussion about what a network can do, and expectations are not unrealistic. Similarly, there is clarity about the process. Lines of communication and dissemination are clear and systematic (but flexible).

- Successful networks require **commitment** because they require extra time besides the usual schedules of partners. Networking is time and energy consuming. There have to be **gains** for members: participants should know what they are getting out of participation — otherwise there will be no commitment. A network should make its members more effective.

Characteristics of the network

- A successful network is **flexible** and capable of responding to changes in the environment. The network is also flexible in that room is created for **self-organisation** — participants who link up can start all kinds of initiatives together. This fosters creativity and learning.

- There is an atmosphere of **safety** in which to express doubts and criticisms and manage uncertainties; in other words the network constitutes a safe setting for knowledge exchange.

- There is **trust** among the members and between participants and donors. Without the confidence that everyone is in it for the larger good there will be a tendency to withhold knowledge in order to strengthen one's position.

- There is **openness to different points of view**, different values, and different interpretations of reality. A successful network's knowledge exchange function is not hampered by the constraints of a particular discourse or political project. The network may engage in advocacy but its 'common voice' does not prohibit the coexistence of different opinions. **Cultural issues** are recognised and discussed in the network.

- **Joint activities**: A major challenge of each network is to keep the momentum and prevent discouragement. This can't be achieved unless there are joint activities. Such activities also show the value of membership.

Governance, legitimacy and organisation of the network

- A successful network is **democratic and inclusive**. It is not controlled by a single set of interests. Members may have unequal capacity and strength but they have an equal voice. Those who coordinate the network are accountable to the members.

- A successful network strives to **mitigate power issues**. It has mechanisms in place that regulate conflict and prevent personal issues from taking the foreground. The stronger members have a genuine desire to contribute to open exchange and facilitate the capacity building of other members. They inevitably influence the network more strongly

than weaker members do, but they do not impose their own views at the expense of openness and diversity.

- **Facilitation and moderation:** sustaining networks requires considerable time, effort and resources. There should be at least one person who is enabled to spend time on the facilitation of the network. Some kind of secretariat is needed that coordinates and organises the flows of knowledge, preventing information overload and scatter. It follows that funding is required. However, a network can also be overmoderated, if a moderator has a narrow view of the purpose of the group, takes decisions in an authoritarian way and stifles discussion rather than stimulating it. There is only a narrow space between channelling a discussion smoothly into a constructive direction and pressing people into a straightjacket which would exclude any spontaneous detours, exchanges or personal remarks. The role of the moderator is crucial, since all the other dimensions depend on a moderator who assures that the group avoids the many possible pitfalls.

- The **role of the coordinator or secretariat** should be clearly circumscribed, active, and empowering. Having a strong and capable secretariat at all levels is of vital importance.

- **Regular face-to-face meetings** are important to build personal relationships and achieve continuity. Knowledge sharing needs to occur on a regular basis, otherwise information provided may already be outdated. Strategies working today may not work in a few months' time, particularly given the dynamics of conflict situations.

- The participating organisations have a sense of **ownership**. It is their process and not something that has been imposed by other organisations, donors or governments.

- A successful network's representative structures are considered **legitimate** by the members as well as by external parties.

- A successful network **structure** contributes to increased legitimacy and ownership and ensures both flexibility and good coordination.

Coverage and inclusiveness of the network

- A successful network strikes the right **balance** between **inclusiveness** and diversity on the one hand, and **focus** and direction on the other. This goes for content as well as membership.

- **Membership balance**: if only people with a similar background participate, opinions may not differ sufficiently to generate creative ideas. Moreover, if only a small fraction of the potential constituency participates, people will turn to other forums where these people do meet. On the other hand, by asking too many people with different backgrounds to join, cooperation could also falter. The reasons are that the added value of the network is not so clear; chances increase that individual contributions are beyond the interest of the majority of members; people hesitate to engage themselves because they do not see a common denominator which brings participants together; and there may be an information overload — unless the information is skilfully channelled into different subgroups and discussion threads.

Content of the network

- A successful network does not strive to be an overall, comprehensive knowledge system, but aims to offer a **stimulating framework** that facilitates exchange and access to knowledge sources.

- **Tacit as well as explicit knowledge** is exchanged; a successful network brings people into contact with each other who can share experiences in an open setting, but it also attempts to draw experiences together into codified knowledge that can be distributed more easily. Most

observers agree that a combination of face-to-face and online interaction is the best way to achieve this.

- **Content balance**: if the field of discussion is too narrow, it will not stimulate a broad enough flow of information and interaction may be less creative since creative ideas often result from the combination of hitherto uncombined elements. In addition, a too narrow field would only attract the 'usual suspects' who already know each other fairly well; little cross-fertilization would take place. If the field is too broad ('Conditions for peace on earth'), however, then the interaction remains too vague and becomes uninteresting for serious people, and it becomes very difficult to arrive at common products which bind the group together.

- **Results**: knowledge sharing may generate 'common products'. These could be joint publications containing lessons learned or recommendations, joint projects or programmes, the organisation of an event, a broadening of the community, or the start of a new one in a different field or region. Many communities are created for the exchange of knowledge and experience per se. But there is always an implicit assumption that this exchange will lead to better results, if not through joint activity, then through the improved functioning of the individual participants who are enriched by the exchange.

- A successful network pays attention to issues of **language and translation** in order to make available knowledge accessible to as many within the network as possible. This goes for language differences in the narrow sense of the term, but also applies to the use of jargon versus more accessible language.

Context of the network

- **Embeddedness**: any network should be linked in an appropriate way to a wider environment, to its social and political context as well as to

neighbouring communities and similar initiatives in other countries or regions. At the same time, the network should not be embedded to the extent that it cannot operate autonomously.

- A successful network establishes **links with other networks** in order to prevent duplication and maximise knowledge benefits. If this is not the case, a network remains quite isolated. Insights generated in similar networks might not be taken into account, resources will not be pooled, results cannot be compared, and ideas will remain less widespread.

- A successful network operates in an **enabling context**. It is not obstructed by governments, conflict parties or other organisations. The basic infrastructure is present and there is some level of safety and security. The political environment fosters free speech and freedom of movement. If the context is not so enabling, creative ways are found to deal with constraints, such as bad infrastructure, illiteracy, and a hostile political context.

Funding of the network

- The **funding structure** of a successful network has the following characteristics:
  - There is sufficient funding for networking and knowledge sharing activities, even if the direct impact of these cannot always be shown.
  - At the same time, the network is accountable financially.
  - Donors do not impose particular approaches or particular activities.
  - It does not provide a position of power to one organisation at the funding interface, but ensures that the funds benefit the network as a whole.
  - It does not enhance competition between members.
  - Donors engage in knowledge exchange with the network, thus contributing to the knowledge processes inside it and linking it up to other networks.

- Donors take the knowledge generated in the network seriously and make use of it in their policy formulation as much as possible. This will increase the relevance of the network and give participants an incentive to continue contributing to it.

Monitoring and evaluation

- A successful network has good and working **monitoring and evaluation** (M&E) procedures in order to assess impact and to continue to learn and improve practice.

3.1 Concluding remarks

The factors presented in this chapter together make up quite a list. It should be emphasised that it is never possible for any network to live up to all of them.

Rather, the list should be viewed as an ideal situation that is worth striving for but that will never be fully achieved. In addition, different networks may deem different factors important for their particular purpose and make different choices regarding some of them.

Thus, the factors listed in this chapter may serve more as a set of principles that can help networks see how they are doing and what kind of choices may need to be made. …

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