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Focus on Peace

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Introduction

“Peace isn’t everything, but without peace you have nothing” – in recent years, the importance of peace building and civil conflict transformation for development has steadily increased. Besides reducing structural causes of conflict, today, support for mechanisms of non-violent conflict transformation and civil crisis prevention has a central role to play. Current development policy peace work is based not least on the responsibility imposed by the German past. This teaches us the need to reduce or avoid violence, and to play an active role in promoting understanding among peoples and sustainable, just peace worldwide.

In his speech accepting the Nobel Peace Prize, the former German chancellor Willy Brandt noted that “peace, like freedom, is no original state which existed from the start; we shall have to make it, in the truest sense of the word”. Today, national interests may not be separated from the joint responsibility for peace worldwide. It is not enough to merely formulate peaceable intentions, we must actively strive and help to organise peace.

In its Action Plan for Civilian Crisis Prevention, Conflict Resolution and Post-Conflict Peace Building, the German Federal Government has now designated the Civil Peace Service (ZFD) “the most important peace policy instrument for promoting the peace potential of civil society”. ZFD can act in all three phases of a conflict – before the outbreak of violence, during violence and in the aftermath of conflict - by using non-violent means to influence the form and dynamics of conflict in order to prevent, end or at least mitigate violence. Although the ambitious name initially aroused expectations which had to be scaled back to what was feasible as a programme, and although many political and diplomatic actors expressed scepticism or even mockery, ZFD has in fact established itself during the almost seven years since its formation as not only a practical tool for peace building in development cooperation but also as a shining example of cooperation between German state and non-governmental agencies in the ZFD consortium.

The German Development Service (DED) is the only state member of the ZFD consortium, and has adopted peace promotion and civil conflict transformation in its mission statement as priority areas of its work. In accordance with ZFD standards developed jointly in the consortium, DED is currently using the peace building tool in 14 countries, with strategic assignment of over 70 peace workers to local partner organisations, both state and non-governmental.

Where political conditions permit, ZFD is particularly active in helping resolve regional and even national conflicts at local level through discourse between partners – but never by itself. ZFD is not a bringer of peace as such, but rather an instrument of international politics, diplomacy and development policy designed to assure people that there is always a civil alternative for settling conflicts, i.e. one which does not involve violence and war, and to give them the methods and knowledge for this. This is a very demanding task, often associated with high expectations and little public recognition.

The DED is frequently asked what civil conflict transformation and peace promotion mean in concrete terms, what kind of activities the DED promotes in this field, and what sustainable effects the multifaceted ZFD involvement is seeking to achieve. These enquiries are the reason for the present book, which provides practical insights into the wide range of DED work in this field and shows the realities in which DED development workers are operating. Dr Aurelia Berke has assembled a lively overview of the experience and environment of the peace development workers, based on reports, media articles and her own interviews.

The ten projects from ten countries presented here are dynamically and repeatedly confronted with unpredictable political events and constantly changing environments. Making a visible impact in this situation is a daily challenge for ZFD. With this inhouse ZFD experience in mind, the DED is accordingly participating intensively in the discourse on the question of impact orientation. One prerequisite for evaluating

the effects of a ZFD intervention is the recognition that peaceful development and non-violent conflict transformation always involve extended learning processes and changes in behaviour patterns. Positive behavioural modifications by all the actors involved in a conflict – in some cases in tiny steps – are a basic prerequisite for sustainable peaceful transformation of the conflict. Even the smallest milestones can be recognised in this process. Our local partners have deliberately chosen this option, and authorised our peace workers to provide professional support to them on this joint stage on the path of peace. To all of them, we extend our respect and gratitude.

The image shows two handwritten signatures in black ink. The signature on the left is 'Jürgen Wilhelm' and the signature on the right is 'Matthias Ries'.

Dr. Jürgen Wilhelm,
Director General

Dr Matthias Ries,
Head of Division "Civil
Conflict Transformation
and Peace Building"



Afghanistan

Calling Kabul

“Everything’s dark and there’s no power,” was Katja Richter’s cheerful greeting when I called her cell phone in the evening. This is nothing unusual – in fact, it’s normal in Kabul, as I discover. “If everything’s going well, we get power every other day. Today’s the first,” she says in a matter-of-fact way, as if it isn’t worth mentioning. In any case, Katja Richter isn’t someone to make a fuss about the problems of everyday life in Afghanistan. The impression she makes is commanding, balanced and focused, but also very open, confident and positive. When she talks about her work, she reveals a passion that shows that Kabul is more than just a job to her.

The ethnologist has been working for ZFD here since June 2005 at the United Nations Hu-

man Settlements Programme (UN Habitat), which helps governments in developing new settlements and rebuilding destroyed settlements. Since 2002, UN Habitat has been the lead organisation in Afghanistan in implementing the National Solidarity Programme (NSP). The NSP is funded by the World Bank and various foreign governments, and is being carried out under the Afghan Ministry of Development. It is a village development programme on a unique scale – the aim is to mobilise village communities throughout the country to elect their own development council, who then decide which projects are most urgent in the community and deserve international support. This is an intelligent concept, seeking to establish democratic values at commu-

nity level and enabling the people in the villages to take control of their reconstruction and development projects in the long term.

UN Habitat is now working with some 3,000 local communities in nine provinces, including the south of the country, where there is virtually no international aid presence because of the tense security situation. “The organisation trains district trainers and local organisers, who travel to the villages to survey the people’s needs and organise elections for the local village development councils,” explains Katja Richter. “The councils decide which projects are implemented. Then, the UN Habitat workers help with project planning, but the villages retain ultimate responsibility.”

Not surprisingly, this process is not always so smooth. The question is, after all: What is it that the village needs most? Opinions often differ on this, with one person wanting to build a road while others might prefer a school, a dam or even a generator that would give them at least one hour of power a day. The elections can also cause problems, for example if members of the traditional shura are not elected to the development council. The shura is a council of elders, made up of prominent figures in the village, but without any democratic legitimation. “For the most part, the people from the former shura are also elected to the village council,” explains Katja Richter, “which is a good thing, as in this way as many power structures, including traditional ones, are integrated into the process. Even mullahs are elected to the councils.” However, there are other problems lurking in the thicket of village conflict potential. These may involve disputes about water distribution, or about land which changed hands repeatedly in the confusion of war. Another reason why UN Habitat district trainers and organisers – all Afghans, living and working locally – need to be prepared for such situations. This is where Katja Richter’s work starts: after Nouroz, the Afghan New Year celebrations on 21 March, she will hold the first workshops on mediation and conflict transformation for the UN Habitat

district trainers and organisers in the provinces. These promise to be interesting for all involved!

No half measures

Over the past few months, Katja Richter has been putting a wealth of creativity into the workshop materials, which present “Western concepts” but leave scope for discussion. Striking the right balance here calls for cultural sensitivity and acceptance that personal ways of thinking are not automatically right for Afghans as well. “This is immediately clear from the fact that there is no single word for a term like ‘mediation’ in Dari or Pashto,” Katja Richter explains. “This is why the workshops are planned more on the lines of discussion fora. I’ll present the Western concepts of mediation and then ask the participants to talk about these and think what equivalents there are in their own culture. It’s only when people can work out for themselves what they need and what will help them in certain situations that you end with something sustainable. You can’t preach the virtues of alien mechanisms which are simply a closed book for the Afghans. You can only help them rediscover their own mechanisms.”

You can see how much Katja Richter is looking forward to this discovery. When she talks about the teaching materials she has developed, she shows an enthusiasm which is contagious even over the shaky cell phone connection. She explains that she has made her handouts, manuals and action plans as practical as possible, trying to apply “Western concepts” to everyday Afghan situations. “The material is being tested in Mazar (Balkh province) and discussed by Afghans, so that it might possibly be further improved,” she enthuses. She has even designed a cartoon story, with the underlying idea that UN Habitat workers will be taking the material to village councils where many members might not be able to read, let alone their families.

This is a huge task, as she admits, particularly since not only men but also some women are forming development councils, so that the con-

tent of the materials has to be adapted accordingly. But Katja Richter does not stop at half measures. She works on the text until it meets the target group needs. Fortunately, she recently gained the services of two local staff who she is training, and who are helping translate the materials into Dari and Pashto. They will also be present at the workshops – the future participants speak virtually no English. Workshops are planned for all the nine provinces where UN Habitat is operating. “Action plans will be drawn up so that the participants can go on working with their new knowledge, apply it in their work in the villages, and pass it on in turn,” Katja Richter says. “There will also be follow-up workshops, to see if the first ones have been fruitful.”

To develop the training materials and draw up a programme plan, Katja Richter started by visiting several provinces to get a good insight into the work of the village representative bodies. I asked her if UN Habitat feels it is important that Afghan women should be integrated into the development process. “Naturally, it’s desirable,” she answers, “but you always have to bear in mind that we are dealing with values which have evolved over time and which written regulations have no impact on. If, for example, we said there had to be women’s councils, that would very quickly create a lot of problems. Not everywhere, but certainly in some provinces. You give women more opportunity if you don’t make rules.” For example, there are women’s councils in several provinces, sometimes men and women sit together in the village assembly, while elsewhere women are not allowed to vote at all. “It varies tremendously from one province to another,” Katja says.

Besides the elections which Katja Richter was able to attend – they are always a great event for the villagers, although the votes are mostly cast in cardboard boxes – she also visited various literacy classes in the villages where adults learn reading, writing and arithmetic. These are also run by UN Habitat trainers under the Literacy and Community Empowerment Programme

(LCEP), another programme which UN Habitat is a partner in. These courses are so popular in the villages that the village development councils often apply for them as NSP projects. And this gave Katja Richter another brilliant idea.

Thinking along

For Katja Richter, the intensity of the villagers’ appetite for educational material is simply overwhelming. “There are 25 people sitting there in just a few square metres, their faces glowing, eyes shining, learning everything you can offer. They’re like sponges, eagerly soaking up the little that’s available. The plastered walls in the tiny rooms are covered with poems, letters and formulae they’ve written themselves,” she says, adding, “It’s fascinating. Particularly since the women especially often use their new ability to write to express and cope with the things they’ve experienced – it’s their way of dealing with trauma. In Herat a woman told me how she’d lost her entire family in a Soviet air attack, and what a bad time she’d had ever since. Now, she says, she’s written about what happened and posted it for people to read, and she’s feeling much better.”

This makes it all the more unfortunate that the future of the LCEP – currently funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) – is currently in the air. However, the people in the villages need to fill the hole left by the war so badly that they intend to continue the literacy classes without official help, if necessary. The thing they lack most of all is new material. “There’s just one reader with stories, developed under the LCDEP, which has turned into an absolute classic,” Katja Richter explains. “This is why I thought that I could make my material available to the classes as well. During my visit to Herat I saw how teaching materials are passed around and discussed within families as well. It would be wonderful if that could be done with my material on conflict transformation.” The additional work involved is completely un-

important to her. “All you need is to simplify the texts a bit – that’s not much work, when you think of the effect you can have.”

Something that came through repeatedly during our discussion was how important the people she works with and the task she is performing at UN Habitat are to Katja Richter. This is why it will be impossible for her to simply fly out of Kabul after her scheduled two-year stint. “Peace building is a long-term matter, and I can’t just leave people on their own in the middle of the project,” she says simply. I still feel that it must be difficult to live in a country where danger waits round every corner, and I ask her if she finds the security restrictions that are part of her everyday life in Afghanistan burdensome. She says not, although there are obviously more rules than I had suspected. For example, she can only drive in Kabul if accompanied by a male driver – a rule she obeys strictly, even if the driver mostly sits in the passenger seat. Cross-country trips are not allowed, nor is travel at night or a stroll after nightfall. “I don’t actually feel unsafe,” she says thoughtfully. “It’s perhaps more a pressure you don’t think about, but is always there.” In any event, it seems to have no impact on her energy. She is already thinking of following the workshops on mediation with discussion fora on history analysis in which participants look at their personal histories and evaluate and judge them – a small but important step on the way to improved understanding between village communities.

Katja Richter simply bubbles with ideas and energy. And this is at eight o’clock at night, after a full day’s work, and sitting in the dark. Well, as I finally discover, she is not actually entirely in the dark – she fitted up an old car battery so that she can connect a small lamp when the power goes out. “There are only Pakistan candles available here, and they burn down very fast,” she says, sounding as if it is the most natural thing in the world to convert a car battery. That alone would be too much for me, and I can only conclude that Katja Richter is the right woman in the

right place. It is equally certain that she will be putting good ideas into practice in the Hindu Kush during the months and years to come – in her matter-of-fact, pragmatic way, with remarkable cultural sensitivity, and a wealth of energy which seems not to know the meaning of downtime. Just listening to Katja Richter makes it clear that she feels a genuine need to help people to help themselves.



Uganda

No fear of large animals – the pacification of Yumbe Province

“When two elephants fight, the grass suffers,” as the African proverb says. In Yumbe Province, at the north eastern tip of Uganda, on the border with the Sudan and Congo, this saying is proving all too true. For years, there has been a fearsome struggle between rebels and the government, in which not the combatants have been the victims, but the men, women and children in the villages. The rebels are former soldiers of Idi Amin, who helped put President Yoweri Museveni in power in 1986 by overthrowing Milton Obote. Museveni made many promises, but kept none. Driven by fury and disappointment, the soldiers formed the Uganda National Rescue Front II (UNRF II) and launched a bloody guerrilla war, officially directed at Museveni’s troops, but actu-

ally targeting the civilian population. Villages are being attacked, houses plundered and razed, people are dying. Some are being abducted, recruited by force and trained as fighters – mostly young men, sometimes even children.

Nobody is safe in Yumbe, people live without hope and in constant fear. Fear of losing their few possessions, of being driven away, abducted or killed. Even after the UNRF II rebels withdrew to Sudan in 1999 and the attacks decreased, life in Yumbe was at a standstill. Then, in April 2002, something unthinkable happened. Suddenly, the entire UNRF II rebel army came to the indigenous NGO Participatory Rural Action for Development (PRAFORD) and declared their readiness for peace talks with the government.

This was an unforgettable day for Yumbe. It was also an unforgettable day for the woman who, together with PRAFORD director Joyce Ayikoru, did everything she could to make these talks possible – Barbara Winstel.

A woman in no-man's land

Just a few months earlier, in November 2001, the German ethnologist had been sent to Yumbe with the Civil Peace Service. As the first and only representative of an international organisation in this forgotten corner of Uganda, she had her hands full. Together with the local government and the dedicated staff of PRAFORD, she started establishing contacts and using the first awareness raising workshops to create a forum for a peace dialogue.

The workshops were aimed not only at the civil population and their religious and political leaders, but also at representatives of the army and returning ex-rebels, who were freed from penalties by the government amnesty in 2000, provided that they laid down their arms voluntarily. They were freed at least from official penalties, though it is still unclear whether and how the local communities will accept their former tormentors.

One of Barbara Winstel's more important tasks is accordingly to prepare ex-rebels, the army and villages for peaceful coexistence and find viable pathways to the future for all those involved. Her training sessions are reaching a broad public, and her networking is also paying off. Word of the activities of the white woman from Yumbe spreads quickly, even on the other side of the border with Sudan, where 2,000 armed UNRF II rebels are still hiding in the bush.

The first large meeting held by Barbara Winstel and Joyce Ayikoru, with financial aid from the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), is a total success. All the key groups in society are here, from the village elders to religious leaders, local politicians and representatives of the government forces. The best thing

of all is that the UNRF II rebels have gained confidence in the international presence, and sent a delegation. For the first time ever, representatives of the army and rebels are speaking face to face. "The people wanted peace," says Barbara Winstel. "All parties were ready to talk, on both the rebel and army sides. What they were lacking was a form of dialogue."

The dialogue form then took on a curious parallel life of its own. First, awareness raising workshops are now held throughout the entire region – huge gatherings with over 300 participants, including representatives of the army and rebels. Second, Barbara Winstel has become more and more a personal representative for both sides. As a result, rebel representatives come to her door secretly to pass on important news. Much of this is semi-official. "Not because we wanted this, but because the parties to the conflict initially preferred an indirect dialogue," explains Winstel. In discussions with representatives of the government army, her house is always surrounded by heavily armed soldiers. While she feels a little uneasy at this, she is also aware that these discussions are decisive in maintaining contact with the other side.

Finally, in April, things come to a head. 2,000 rebels appear, all of them – including their leader Ali Bamuze – prepared to lay down their arms and start peace negotiations. Now, everything has to happen very fast: together with DANIDA, Barbara Winstel improvises accommodation for the 2,000 rebels at Bidibidi, a nearby former refugee camp. Joyce Ayikoru notifies the minister, who comes from Yumbe, and she persuades the president's brother, who happens to be staying in the nearby town of Arua, to take part in the first makeshift meeting the next day. And the next day, more than 400 people assemble in the PRAFORD "peace garden". Those present again stress their desire for peace. Meanwhile, General Bamuze and Salim Saleh, the president's brother, have a private meeting. This is the start of the official dialogue. Six weeks later, in June, rebels and government sign the ceasefire

agreement. Then, on Christmas Eve 2002, the peace treaty is signed with great celebrations. It is a very moving moment for all, and particularly for Barbara Winstel and the staff of PRAFORD. They can still hardly believe what they have achieved.

New challenges

However, they are not given much time to enjoy their success. The signing of the peace treaty faces Barbara Winstel and Joyce Ayikoru's team with a whole new range of challenges. The former rebels obviously cannot stay at Bidibidi forever, living off humanitarian aid from the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP). Winstel and the PRAFORD staff accordingly put together a catalogue of measures to facilitate the reintegration of the former soldiers into village life. Because both former perpetrators and their victims have to be prepared for this, Winstel and Ayikoru continue to hold training sessions and workshops aimed to help all those involved deal with the new situation.

Barbara Winstel also works on forming and training mobile mediation teams to support the reintegration of the rebels. They are needed particularly where smaller conflicts break out after the return. And there are plenty of these. Often, for example, the wives of former combatants have been abandoned for years and married other men, and the returnees now want them back. Reclaiming property is another problem. "The mediation teams try to smooth things over as quickly and seamlessly as possible, to avoid expensive and time consuming police or court proceedings," Winstel explains. This is an approach which has proved outstandingly successful, not least because the committed PRAFORD peace architects have a very high reputation in Yumbe (and even outside the district) and are accepted by all the groups as official mediators.

There is another reason why trust in the work of Barbara Winstel and the PRAFORD team is very important. Many of the returnees

need psychological support as well as practical assistance. They have had dreadful experiences and done dreadful things. They have plundered, murdered, abducted and driven people from their homes. Now, they have to learn to live with their guilt, control their aggression, and deal constructively with new conflicts. Many were simply driven into the arms of the rebels by poverty. Like Candiga Safi. Today, he works as a night porter in Yumbe city. In those days, however, he was unemployed and his family was poor. In 1999 someone came to him from Sudan and promised money, training and food. Today, the 26-year-old still has nightmares about what followed. "Many lads come to me and ask about my experiences in the bush war," he says. "I tell them the truth and warn them. Life in the bush is hell."

It is particularly difficult, or even impossible, for the 200 or so child soldiers who returned from the bush with the rebels to forget this hell. Several of them – then boys aged 10-15 – did not go voluntarily like Safi, but were abducted by the rebels or picked up off the streets. Intimidation and abuse were not unusual in the bush, and many children took part in killings themselves. To help heal the mental and physical scars of these children and young people, Barbara Winstel, with assistance from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and with other, local initiatives has created a special programme. For example, the permanent psychological service is accompanied by medical services and educational efforts – HIV/AIDS in particular is a major problem in Yumbe. Many returning children have since lost their families to the disease, and several are infected themselves. This is why training and income-creating projects are also needed – like the new craft trade school in Yumbe, where child soldiers and ex-combatants can train as carpenters and bricklayers. In the workshops, the circular saws screech and the trowels clatter – the school is a complete success.

It is very clear that Barbara Winstel and the PRAFORD staff have done sterling pioneer work on the peace treaty and successful reintegration

process for the ex-rebels and child soldiers in Yumbe. Ex-rebel leader Bamuze mentions the important contribution of the Civil Peace Service in Yumbe at every opportunity – a tribute to Winstel and Ayikoru which is echoed by senior government representatives as well. Particularly since the major West Nile Development Conference in December 2005, organised by the team together with representatives of the district administrations and the ex-rebels' liaison committee, the DED and ZFD have enjoyed a particularly high reputation among all involved. This conference – the first of its kind in Uganda – succeeded in laying a solid foundation for the future development of the West Nile region.

To secure a better and more peaceful future for the region, new programmes were created which will be implemented in the next few years with national and international assistance, ranging from training and income creating measures to long term urban and village development projects. Proof that the intensive commitment of Barbara Winstel and Joyce Ayikoru in the tiny province of Yumbe have set great things in motion. And, as they say in Africa, “a lot of little people in a lot of little places doing a lot of little deeds – can change the face of the Earth”.



Cambodia

Weapons aren't the whole story! The will to rethink values

The weapons have been destroyed, the past is buried, people are living together in peace. This is a wonderful slogan, an optimistic vision for the future of a country where weapons have become part of everyday life. Where conflicts are “resolved” with pistols and rifles, rather than words. Even in 2002 “small arms” are still a normal part of the street scene in Cambodia. AK-47 or G3 rifles are carried openly, slung over the shoulder.

Almost every Cambodian owns a gun, whether they are a he is a businessman in the capital or a rice farmer in the country. And they not only own a gun – they use it to add emphasis, even in “harmless” disputes. Jealous husbands,

feuding neighbours or people arguing over a traffic accident – typically, one of the parties will soon have a finger on the trigger. Armed robbery is a daily occurrence, and anybody owning a moped (a greatly desired possession) in Phnom Penh is living dangerously. A well-aimed shot in the back, and the moped has a new owner. Everyday life in Cambodia. Everyday life in a society which has been through hell, and emerged to create a hell of its own.

The Cambodians have experienced far too much violence and terror for thirty years. First, there was the horror when the USA carpet bombed the country, then there was the terror of the Pol Pot regime which killed over a million people between 1975-1979, including almost the

entire elite and tens of thousands of academics. But this was not enough. Next came the Vietnamese occupation, which lasted until 1989, and the civil war with residual Khmer Rouge guerrilla groups, for which the government organised citizens' militias and finally armed parts of the civilian population – with small arms, naturally. The civil war ended in 1998, and the criminals were given an amnesty. However, the weapons remained in the hands of the Cambodians. The Cambodians in turn were not only deeply disturbed by the violence and suffering they had experienced, but also had to live side by side with the people who had previously been responsible for having their relatives killed.

All this was in a state where corruption is widespread and the courts and police offer no legal security. As a result, Cambodians rely on themselves and their trusty Kalashnikov. The shooting and murder continues, at home, in families, on the street, at school. People can get used to violence very quickly. Weaning people from violence, however, is much more difficult. Even so, this is the stated goal of the Working Group for Weapons Reduction (WGWR), which was formed in 1998 – to convince the Cambodian population that conflicts can be resolved even without small arms or hand grenades, and that weapons mean less security, not more. An ambitious project, virtually impossible without the necessary tools for public relations work and peace education. Both of these arrive in spring 2002, in the form of two highly motivated experts from the DED Civil Peace Service – Marcos Smith and Gabriele Otterstetter. They have their hands full in Phnom Penh.

Small campaign – big impact

While Gabriele Otterstetter assists the WGWR's media work, Marcos Smith starts on professionalising public relations work and training his colleagues in participative teaching techniques. This is not easy, as the political scientist soon discovers that the team lacks experience in both sectors.

And what use is the most attractive poster if the target groups do not understand the message correctly? What use are regular workshops, if they use front-of-class teaching without involving participants at all?

As a result, Smith works with the team to develop new concepts for public relations materials and drafts new training plans. His commitment is so obvious that his local colleagues soon develop a new enthusiasm for their work – something which Smith had initially found lacking. “The staff sometimes gave the impression that they hardly identified with their work,” he says. “One reason for this is that proposals for materials were developed in the team, but the director often ignored these and implemented his own ideas, which stifled any existing initiative on the part of the staff.” Smith solves the problem in a series of meetings with the director, and the staff gradually abandon their deep-rooted loyalty to authority and bring more enjoyment and ambition to their work.

This is important, because the WGWR has just received a grant for a peace education and disarmament campaign, a project supported by the United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs (UNDDA) and the Hague Appeal for Peace. This starts where there is the greatest potential for a future weaponless Cambodia – students. The aim is to distribute materials opposing small arms ownership and use to state schools, organise events with young people, and train teachers in peace education techniques. For the small team – Smith is working with four local workers and an outside consultant – this is a major challenge, particularly since the project is to be implemented simultaneously in two provinces. With a lot of patience and persuasiveness, they succeed in getting the educational departments of the two provinces to approve and support the campaign – in writing, even! This is an important step, as state blessing is essential for successful implementation of the project.

Now, Marcos Smith and his Cambodian colleagues can really start work – t-shirts, caps

and posters are designed, tested and distributed, the first events with students are coordinated and various workshops for teachers are organised. The programme also includes seminars for the staff of partner organisations. All the effort and the many wearying trips over the bumpy provincial roads soon bear fruit. The campaign is well received, by all involved. The stickers opposing small arms are even distributed nationally, with the help of the education ministry, and radio and TV spots reach not only the students and teachers but also other target groups. An art competition held in several schools in June 2004 is greeted enthusiastically by the students, resulting in a colourful riot of new peace motifs and visions – the most creative won a new bicycle.

In parallel, Marcos Smith and the WGWR team are working enthusiastically on a curriculum for peace education. The manual is designed for advanced training, primarily of teachers of “civics and ethics”, includes chapters on topics like “TV and violence”, “Consequences of using small arms” and “Visions of peace”, and important tips on dealing with prejudices and conflicts. It is being tested in the training sessions and continuously improved. It emerges in the process that the educational standard of the teachers is very low, so that they have not only difficulty but also reservations about learning the new material and techniques. “Peace education is a new subject in Cambodia,” Smith explains. “Some teachers are concerned that the new techniques might give the students too much self confidence. In the teacher-student relationship, this is perceived as a challenge.” Nevertheless, the curriculum is very well received, and even gets official blessing. On the day of its publication, Cambodia’s education minister joins the German and American ambassadors, and proves to be the manual’s biggest fan – a major achievement. In the fight against small arms abuse, the WGWR needs all the state support it can get.

Lobbying pays off

Contacts with government and assistance with lobbying, research and public relations work are currently Gabriele Otterstetter’s responsibilities. While the peace campaign is in full spate, Gabriele Otterstetter (who has a master’s degree in education) is helping the WGWR staff write press releases, layout image and information brochures, and set up a website which can also be used to send out an electronic newsletter. Like Marcos Smith, she needs a lot of patience and sensitivity here, as her two local colleagues have only limited experience with writing press copy. The answer is constant practice – and at some point, it becomes routine.

The improved external communication makes new contacts possible, including international ones. Regular meetings are held with other organisations trying to banish small arms from Cambodia, and finally a partnership develops with the South African “Organisation Safer Africa”. Soon, WGWR’s reputation has spread well beyond southeast Asia, new offices are being rented, more staff hired for Otterstetter to support.

From 2004 onwards, monitoring and advocacy in particular take up more of her time. Small arms abuse needs to be documented and researched – an essential step in getting the Cambodian government to do more about small arms control and reduction. Otterstetter and her team accordingly painstakingly put together a database which they feed daily with the latest media reports and their own surveys of the general public. “The database was an important tool for getting objective and verifiable data on small arms abuse, because there was nothing of the kind in Cambodia previously, and figures were all estimates,” explains Otterstetter.

Even so, collaboration with the government is difficult at first, and Otterstetter’s scheduled two-year assignment passes all too quickly. DED quickly assigns a worthy successor – Sofia Hedlund, an expert in international politics with ex-

tensive knowledge of development cooperation. Hedlung continues her predecessor's work. She helps coordinate workshops, conferences and campaigns addressing the government, security forces and other NGOs, and works with the team on various research projects on the negative impact of small arms. Besides all this, she keeps an eye on the quality of public relations activities.

The work pays off: the WGWR's tireless lobbying and public education campaigns make the consequences of small arms abuse an issue of growing public concern, and the government finally takes notice. It passes new small arms legislation, and is now officially helping to collect and destroy the rifles, pistols and hand grenades which are still in circulation. Public ceremonies are held at which weapons are stacked and burned. These are very moving moments, with Buddhist monks in orange robes giving their blessing and many onlookers weeping. Memories of horror, dead relatives and lost years go up with the flames. Fire cleanses.

The fact that it is possible to walk safely on the streets of Phnom Penh – during the day, at least – is one of the fruits of the WGWR's work. The National Commission for Weapons Management and Reform has recognised its achievements, and confirmed its willingness to cooperate with the organisation in writing – something which is exceptional in Cambodia. “Official involvement of an NGO in government affairs really is unusual, and is a sign of great approval,” Sofia Hedlund comments. This makes it all the more unfortunate that the WGWR is currently having to curtail its activities severely, until new donors can be found. Nevertheless, the work of Marcos Smith, Gabriele Otterstetter and Sofia Hedlund has more than paid off.

The networks they have created will take on a life of their own, and the large number of trained and sensitised actors will help lay the basis for a peaceful future in Cambodia. It is to be hoped that the government will continue to play its part. If so, values could change over the long term, visions could become reality, the mistakes

of the past could be learned from and the problems of the present overcome.



Guatemala

With brush and shovel on the track of the past

On the dirt road leading to the tiny village of Vi'q'um in the mountains of the Guatemalan highlands, a jeep is carrying an unusual load. The cardboard boxes contain the skeletal remains of two women and four girls, who were killed during the military reign of terror at the start of the 1980s. The SUV is from Guatemala City, or more exactly from the laboratory of the Centro de Análisis Forense y Ciencias Aplicadas (CAFCA), the centre for forensic analysis and applied science. There, the members of the CAFCA exhumation team have painstakingly identified the remains of the victims. Now, they are on the way with the carefully packed bones to the victims' relatives, so that they can bury and mourn their missing daughters properly. The CAFCA staff

have to walk the last part of the way to the village, as there are no roads here in this remote corner of the Quiché. Accompanying the team is Udo Krenzer, who has been supporting the work of CAFCA for four years, first in the Civil Peace Service, and since 2005 with funding from the DED core programme. Together with the other anthropologists, he will attend the mass for the repatriated dead the next day, and talk to the relatives about their loss.

The trip to Vi'q'um is just one of many expeditions by Udo Krenzer and his team, either to exhume bodies or to return identified victims of the war to their home villages. There are still secret cemeteries and unopened, anonymous mass graves all over Guatemala – the sorry heritage of

36 years of civil war between the armed forces and guerrillas in which some 150,000 people were killed and at least 50,000 vanished without trace. Many indigenas were abducted or forcibly resettled by the army and paramilitary groups, several managed to flee across the border to Mexico.

Even today, twenty years after the worst crimes and almost ten years after the peace agreement, many of the survivors do not know what happened to their relatives. This uncertainty makes it impossible to put the past behind them, particularly since those affected often have to live next door to those who were involved in the death or disappearance of their relatives. The deeds of the perpetrators are still unpunished, torture and genocide are only being prosecuted on paper. One result is that knowledge that the perpetrators are unpunished and the lack of an effective system of justice create a sense of powerlessness and absence of justice – explosive material for new conflicts and aggression. Guatemala leads the world in the number of cases of lynch law.

The exhumations are very important of the peace process for the Guatemalan post-war population. Besides the healing effect for the relatives, they have a particularly important function in preparing possible court cases in the struggle against the impunity of the perpetrators. The CAFCA's work has focused on both aspects since 1999. To bring to light the truth about past crimes, the quality of the exhumations must meet international scientific standards – as the more solid the evidence, the greater the chance that the perpetrators will be held accountable. This is where Udo Krenzer's work counts. The forensic anthropologist was sent to Guatemala City in April 2002, where he has since made a committed contribution to professionalisation and standardisation of exhumation procedures as a member of the CAFCA exhumation team. He is supported by four local experts at CAFCA, funded through the DED.

A full programme

In practice, Udo Krenzer's day covers a wide range of different tasks, which are not always easy to coordinate in his schedule. First, there is the fieldwork: inspections and exhumations are scheduled by the authorities, so that the members of the exhumation team must be on call at all times. Often, Krenzer – with brush and shovel – is travelling over rocky mountain paths to remote villages, most of them several hours away from the capital. There, he and his team work on excavations or talk to the villagers to get as much information as possible about the missing persons and gather comparative data. Mostly they have an interpreter with them, as the majority of the people in the rural areas of Guatemala speak only Mayan languages. After only a few field trips it was clear to Krenzer how important the work of the CAFCA is to relatives. "Many of the surviving relatives are talking about their experiences and their suffering for the first time," he says. "It's a painful process, but at the same time a healing one, because they are able to talk about something which fear made them suppress for a long time." This is why statements by the "witnesses" are not always accurate – often, the strong emotions distort their view of events. Although this complicates the work of the exhumation team, the anthropologists can understand it. "It's a constant reminder to us," Krenzer says, "that we're dealing with people and individual fates." For many survivors, certainty about their relatives' whereabouts and a dignified burial finally offers an opportunity to make peace with the past and mourn their dead.

When Udo Krenzer is not en route to the villages, his work in his office or laboratory focuses on his contribution to CAFCA's internal quality assurance. So far he has produced a manual with all the important information on field and laboratory work, not only used by the CAFCA anthropologists but also by exhumation teams working in Guatemala and by the public prosecutors. Where the schedule permits and staff

can be present, he holds regular workshops on various specialist topics, from techniques for determining duration of burial to ways of determining the age at death for children's skeletons. He also ensures that the techniques in daily laboratory work, expert reports and examination files meet international scientific standards. Naturally, he himself has to keep up to date. Whenever his timetable allows, he attends scientific congresses and workshops, where he is often able to make valuable contacts with international experts.

At the national level he supports exchanges between CAFCA and the other two organisations engaged in forensic medical work in Guatemala, the Oficina de Derechos Humanos del Arzobispado de Guatemala (Human Rights Office of the Archdiocese of Guatemala – ODHAG) and the Fundación de Antropología Forense de Guatemala (Guatemalan Institute of Forensic Anthropology – FAFG). The long term goal here is to harmonise the operating techniques and procedures of ODHAG, FAFG and CAFCA. However, the ODHAG exhumation team has now had to stop work because of lacking resources. This makes it all the more important that CAFCA can continue its work. Contact has already been established with the FAFG, even if cooperation with the Institute is currently still difficult, given its independence and its separate interests.

With care and persistence

The work of Krenzer and his team is never simple. Anyone delving into the past in Guatemala is living dangerously. CAFCA's work affects the very people who are least interested in investigating the war crimes – those who committed them. The government under President Óscar Berger is cooperative, but the paramilitary forces from the past are still well organised. A warrant seldom leads to a trial; threats and intimidation are still regular occurrences.

Politically motivated violence reached its peak in the run-up to the 2003 presidential elec-

tions, when the candidacy of ex-dictator Rios Montt, under whose rule the worst crimes were committed at the start of the 80s, encouraged paramilitary groups to public brawls and selective murder, including of human rights activists. "We stopped exhumation work during the election, it was simply too dangerous," Krenzer remembers. "The situation has quietened down now, but Montt's supporters are still represented in parliament, and particularly at local level as well, especially in the regions where CAFCA is carrying out exhumations. We still need to be careful."

Despite the difficult circumstances, Krenzer and his team have made some significant achievements in the four years of cooperation. Some 70 percent of the victims investigated were identified, thanks to staff training and better quality work techniques. A database has been set up and is being continuously expanded. CAFCA expert reports are officially recognised as evidence by the courts, and even if there has been no effective prosecution of perpetrators as yet, there are still hopes that the current government will support trials. As a result of the high scientific standard of the Centre's work, it now cooperates with San Carlos University. There, Krenzer and another staff member is designing the module on forensic anthropology in a specialist course – a major step, as Guatemala still does not have a university course in this field. Thanks to the successful cooperation the project was included in the DED core programme in March 2005 and extended for a further two years. Two more years of another full programme for Udo Krenzer and the forensic anthropologists at CAFCA. Their job now is to expand the national and international network, and increase public awareness of the organisation's work. A web site has already been set up, which is steadily being stocked with information (www.cafcaguatemala.org).

The importance of CAFCA's work for the peace process in Guatemala can hardly be exaggerated. Its influence on criminal investigations is growing steadily, making a decisive contribution to the country's sustainable reconciliation with its

past. The fact that the Centre is receiving international assistance for this has another very important effect, in addition to professionalising the working techniques. It gives the sufferers the feeling that the world is looking at them. The presence of people like Udo Krenzer is giving the survivors a sense that their needs are being taken seriously. A sense that now they know where their relatives are buried they can look ahead again, build their confidence and work together towards a more just future. Like the relatives of the two women and four girls from Vi'q'um, this tiny village in the mountains of the Guatemalan highlands.



Palestine

At the border between the worlds

Bethlehem, 2003. The city's inhabitants don't want to see, hear or know anything. Asked, "How are things?", the answer is often "Sai il Ama" – "Like blindness." When the dawn creeps over Bethlehem, it reveals on the horizon the threatening silhouette of the Israeli wall – documenting in steel concrete of the decades-long conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. Over eight metres high, the wall blocks the main street leading into the heart of the city. Even before the day begins, the wall starts to cast its shadows of aggression, violence and mistrust.

There is always a certain mistrust, although Bethlehem's inhabitants are very hospitable peo-

ple, and always welcome strangers with curiosity and warmth. The blond European, for example, who is entering Mahmoud's vegetable store again, looks pleasant, but perhaps he is an informer. "Are you a traitor, or are you on our side?" asks Mahmoud. A question which the blond European will hear often in the next two years. His name is Matthias Wittrock, a political scientist and student of Islam, who has just moved into the district in Bethlehem. As part of the Civil Peace Service he will work here until 2005 for the Centre for Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation (CCRR). This is no easy task when you remember that Israel and the Palestinians are still far from removed from any reconciliation.

Life in the shadow of the wall

Here in Bethlehem, the conflict with Israel shapes everyday life. Since the end of the second intifada and the construction of the wall, it is more obvious than ever. The wall, which is meant to protect Israel from Palestinian terrorist attacks, not only separates Israelis and Palestinians, but also cuts off Palestinians from each other, keeps farmers from their fields, workers from their jobs and students from their schools. A person who has a job is fortunate indeed. Even then, he is faced by constant uncertainty. Watchtowers and iron gates control and set the pace for commuters. At the checkpoint, heavily armed Israeli soldiers move nervously around, checking everyone trying to travel in or out. A sign warns of “danger to life” in English, Hebrew and Arabic. A ten-minute trip to work can take hours, or be cut off completely. Distant gunfire is heard sporadically in the city.

The constant tension and the feeling of being at “the enemy’s” mercy gnaw away at self-confidence and surface in rage, extremism and violence. The violence is directed not only at the political opponent, but also at neighbours, the immediate family, passers by, adults, young people and children. Violence is part of everyday life in Palestine. It is a valve for collective frustration. At the Israeli occupation, and the fact that the Palestinian system does not protect, does not help, does not function. It seems almost impossible in this desperate situation that mental barriers could be overcome and reconciliation processes started between the two nations. But there are people in Palestine doing just this. Working tirelessly at the details with endless sensitivity to contain the readiness to resort to violence and bring Palestinians and Israelis to the table together. One is Matthias Wittrock, on the CCRR team.

One small step at a time

Anyone trying to establish trust between Palestinians and Israelis has to do so one small step at a time. The work of the CCRR is accordingly focusing on developing peaceful relationships

within Palestinian society. Convincing the Palestinians that conflict need not be settled violently is an essential step towards increasing readiness to engage in dialogue – with each other, but also in contact with Israelis. To lay the foundation for peaceful coexistence, the local CCRR trainers hold workshops at various public and private schools for teachers, young people, adults and educators, aimed at helping them deal better with the violence of everyday life. To settle conflicts with words, instead of fists or weapons. The curriculum includes professional negotiating strategies, techniques for non-violent conflict transformation, and all kinds of peace education tools. Interest in the curriculum is great, and the response to the training sessions good. This is reason enough to improve the work of the CCRR team, make its effect more sustainable, and develop new – and even cross-border – programmes. Exactly this was Matthias Wittrock’s job from 2003 – 2005.

Matthias Wittrock starts work with CCRR in early 2003, shortly before the height of the second intifada. He collaborates closely together with his new colleagues on new training materials, works on advanced training for the freelance trainers, and keeps a constant eye on evaluating and improving procedures and workshops. One of the team’s important tasks is to develop instruments for reliably measuring the effect and success of measures. How do participants rate the training courses, and how are relationships with the Palestinian educational institutions generally? To establish this, Wittrock helps develop questionnaires and feedback forms and send them to the schools. This is a campaign which is well received by the schools, but arouses the ire of the education ministry. “The ministry at first misunderstood the campaign as a dismissive evaluation of its own work,” Wittrock explains. “In subsequent meetings, however, the CCRR managed to present the constructive purpose of the questionnaires, so the misunderstanding was cleared up pretty quickly.” The education ministry is now integrated into the CCRR’s work – another small

triumph over violence and aggression. Even so, the CCRR team has to be careful in its work, particularly where CCRR projects are being implemented together with Israeli organisations. The organisation maintains contacts with Israel despite the continuing Israeli occupation – something which is far from generally accepted in Bethlehem.

Wittrock plays an important role in the dialogue with the Israelis, simply because as a western European he can (mostly) pass the checkpoint, enabling him to act as an intermediary between the two sides. This is not easy – he is occasionally turned back, and once he even has to stand in the rain, take his jacket and sweater off and pull up his shirt. Under these circumstances it is not always easy to maintain "professional distance".

Like most Palestinians in the areas occupied by Israel, Matthias Wittrock also encounters Israelis primarily as soldiers and police. The night-hour house searches, the screaming of Israeli jeep engines, and the rattle of the helicopters in the early hours also leave his nerves raw. And then there is the general "prison rage", which is how he describes the claustrophobic sense that creeps over you when you look at the security wall choking off the city. "Showing solidarity with individuals in this situation while staying between the camps is anything but easy," he says. "It's incredibly important to think about your own role in the conflict critically, otherwise you're in danger of identifying with one side or the other. That would be fatal for the project." Wittrock finds exchanges with other local peace workers particularly helpful in this process of critical reflection. Everyone engaged in peace work in the shadow of the wall faces similar problems at some time or another. In Bethlehem, conflict never takes a vacation.

Small steps that lead to success

Even so, for all the daily challenge to their work from the conflict, Matthias Wittrock and the

CCRR staff have some impressive achievements to show for their two years of cooperation. The CCRR now has a magazine which appears regularly, the "Tree of Hope", and they are working on their own home page. Evaluation of training and optimisation of project planning made it possible to initiate important new programmes and implement them with EU support. For example, under the "Young Politicians Project" they succeeded in bringing together representatives of even feuding groups at almost all Palestinian universities. In the lead-up to the elections, democratic values and parliamentary rules were discussed which were seen as a real chance for a political debate between the parties.

This represented an important contribution by the programme to the peaceful politicisation of young people who are often frustrated and discouraged. In addition, Wittrock and the CCRR team also initiated cross-border programmes. For example, the CCRR cooperated with the "School of Peace" at the Israeli-Palestinian peace village Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam on the largest current encounter project between Palestinian and Israeli journalists. Media representatives from both sides meet regularly in moderated sessions to discuss why it is helpful to write more about peace and less about the war. This is also a major success because Israelis and Palestinians are meeting here as members of civil society and coming to understand that there are people on the "other side" who are not just uniformed figures but also people with everyday worries.

The CCRR projects are small but important steps in the process of mutual Israeli-Palestinian rapprochement, and they are having some effect. Several Fatah groups have even expressed increasing interest in non-violent resistance. However, the CCRR is still dependent on human resources from abroad, simply because of the high staff turnover. A new peace worker has been accordingly on the spot since October 2005. Her name is Carola Becker, and for the next two years she will be continuing what Matthias Wittrock has started. A challenging task! She will be dealing

with project management, programme development, evaluation and public relations, and at the same time constantly be seen as someone between the worlds. Like Matthias Wittrock, she will sometimes be forced to wonder about her personal concept of impartiality. At the same time, she will still be trying with the CCRR team to communicate democratic and peace building values.

With every day that the sun rises over Bethlehem, the shadow of the wall will become a little shorter. Steadily, if almost unnoticeably. Because where politics fails, people take up the peace process themselves. Because Israel and Palestine don't just have hostages to violence and extremism, but also people who refuse to be taken over by hatred. People who despite continuous setbacks are seeking peaceful, non-violent and just solutions. And who want to build bridges instead of walls.



Rwanda

Curtain up! Working with children and young people in Butare

Bihembe, a poor village in the former Butare Province. The little girl on the window ledge peers into the room, curious to see what is happening in the darkened hall at the community centre. She cannot see much through the narrow gap between the closed shutters – there are more than a hundred heads blocking the view of the wall at the end of the room. A wall where pictures can move and speak.

Like many here in the rural areas of Rwanda, the small, hidden spectator has never seen a film before. Spellbound, she watches as the moving pictures tell a story in the semi-darkness of the crowded room. It is the story of a handi-

capped street girl who, despite all the problems of her daily life, keeps up her courage and stands up for her friends and people around her. The story ends, and in the room the people start to discuss it – hesitantly, at first, and then with increasing vigour. Unfortunately, the little girl cannot understand what is being said from her uncomfortable perch. Thoughtfully, she slips down from the window ledge. She thinks about the handicapped heroine in the story. And this gives her new confidence.

Confidence is what the children and young people in Rwanda urgently need. Confidence that helps them live with the evil memories. Memories of how their parents were killed, relatives man-handled or friends raped – in 1994, when the un-

thinkable happened. When neighbours, who had previously greeted them happily, suddenly came to kill. In the hundred days when the hate of the Hutu militias and their helpers was unleashed against the Tutsi and opponents from their own tribe. Over 800,000 people died in the Rwandan genocide. 120,000 children were separated from their parents during the mass flight, countless children were orphaned. Most of them are still on their own. They live with the past, and with the fear that lingers everywhere like a ghost. And still they hope for a peaceful future.

In 2003, four million people voted in the first free elections since the end of the Belgian colonial rule. For a government which decided that there are only Rwandans – no ethnic groups. It remains to be seen whether this really marks the end of the bloody traces of the internecine strife between Hutu and Tutsi. What is certain, however, is that the children and young people in the “land of a thousand hills” can work towards peaceful coexistence today. With the help of several very committed people, they are being given the opportunity to learn about reconciliation and tolerance, to reshape their lives and to engage in democratic debate. In the former Butare (now part of South Province), near the border with Burundi, one of these workers is the educationalist Timo Weinacht. In May 2004 he was sent to the Butare City by the Civil Peace Service, and since then has worked with the local initiatives and authorities to put together several quite spectacular projects. For example, the cinema project Cinéma Education (CINEDUC), which not only held the little lurker from Bihembe spellbound but has become so successful now that it is to be expanded to other provinces.

The power of conviction

“Cinema as a medium for communicating values can achieve a lot – including and particularly in peace education.” Timo Weinacht is convinced of this. And the success seems to support him, as the “cinema workshops” he holds with his team are

packed every time, whether in the Butare City or the villages in the South Province. Films dealing with human rights and in addition with topics like tolerance, ethnic conflicts or discrimination against women are discussed with the participants. This is an advanced teaching method, intended not only to strengthen the participants’ ability to reach moral judgments but also to broaden their historical and cultural horizon.

As many of the young people only speak the local language Kinyarwanda, local presenters help, who have been trained by Weinacht in media pedagogy. They interpret important passages directly, using microphones, and then act as moderators in the subsequent discussion. Sometimes participants are invited to re-enact the film or imagine how the story could continue, which frequently has the nature of a short play, and often contributes to the general entertainment. The discussions often draw parallels with personal situations and produce practical conclusions for personal action.

For example, the girl from Bihembe watching from her hiding place would probably have been astonished to hear what was being discussed in the village community centre after the showing of the Senegalese film “La petite vendeuse de soleil”. The story of the little girl with the crutch who sells newspapers on the streets of Dakar, but despite her poverty still supports her friends, prompted a very lively discussion among the villagers. The result was that the participants in the workshop decided to form a parents’ association and build a primary school together in Bihembe. The school is actually finished now.

For Timo Weinacht and his assistants, organising CINEDUC is very work intensive. The trips to the various villages in South Province take a lot of time, and the mobile cinema equipment – DVD player, projector and generator – also needs care. If the generator breaks down, there can be no show, as there is no electricity in rural areas. Electricity can even be a problem in Butare City – “There’s power only for several hours, mostly at night,” as Weinacht explains. “That’s no so bad,

though. It's more unpleasant if you're without water for days, which also happens quite frequently." But Timo Weinacht is not deterred by this in his work. His day is packed, because besides CINEDUC there is a whole range of other projects to be worked on. In addition to training sessions for Rwandan teachers, educators and human rights activists, which can now be held regularly since the teacher training centre in Butare City has been rehabilitated, there is also social and municipal work on the schedule. For example, Weinacht together with the staff of Réseau d'Information et Formation en Faveur des Enfants de la Rue (RIFFER), a local network of street children centres, supports self-help initiatives by women who can take advantage of training as seamstresses or basket weavers, for example, to give them a new source of income. Another particularly important issue is the reintegration of street children. Because there are plenty of street children, orphans and children without schooling or vocational training, as a result of the genocide, extreme poverty – and another tragedy: HIV/AIDS.

With great patience, Weinacht and the staff off RIFFER have carried out a survey among the children of Butare City, whose results were subsequently presented at an information day and published in the media. "The interest of the political forces and development related actors in improving the lot of children in problem situation wasn't particularly great at first," notes Weinacht. However, for him and the other local social workers, this was no reason to give up. Instead, they used what means were available to create the AMAHOROMOBIL project ("amahoro" is the Kanyarwandan word for "peace"). Once a week, Weinacht and his team drive to the border region with Burundi and help children and young people set up self-help organisations. To make contact at first, they offer exciting activities like participative theatre and street football. Football is played with mixed teams where only the girls are allowed to score goals – the idea is for every-

one to have fun, which means they all really have to be included in the game.

Gradually, this builds up the trust needed to talk to the children and young people about their needs, problems and conflicts, and work out possible solutions together with them. They also try to organise young people and single mothers into working groups and set up educational services to stop children running off to Butare City and becoming street children. All the work, all the travel and the constant lobbying have paid off: since November 2005, the two major projects CINEDUC and AMAHOROMOBIL have a new sponsor – UNICEF.

Networking, networking, networking

The fact that Timo Weinacht has achieved so much in just under a year and a half reflects not only his own commitment but also that of his predecessor. Without the networking of Mechthild Hommes, projects like CINEDUC and AMAHOROMOBIL could hardly have been implemented so quickly. Between 2002 and 2004, the social worker had tirelessly established contact with the many state and non-governmental organisations active in the field of youth work in Butare. This was a very difficult job, because the existing young and vocational training centres and the peace organisations often worked without coordination or even in competition. An additional complication was that the original project executing agency, the Rwandan National Youth Council, had virtually no presence in Butare Province, so that cooperation with the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Culture had to be terminated. Mechthild Hommes successfully dealt with all this, although she was also at the same time "homeless" – i.e. not working in cooperation with a local NGO, but operating on her own, though still having to consult with the administration. She was no more deterred by this than the fact that several organisations lost interest in cooperation as soon as they discovered that there was no additional financial assistance to be

expected. One of the fruits of Mechthild Hommes's coordination work, for example, is that the network of street children centres (later RIFFER) was consolidated and professionalised by training staff in participative teaching methods. "Methods which encourage independent thinking, action and self-initiative among students are still alien to teachers and educators in Rwanda," Hommes explains. "They are used to authoritarian teaching methods which the young people find anything but interesting." Together with the administration, the rehabilitation of the teacher training centre was planned, to provide advanced training for these groups, and this has since been completed. Finally, Hommes implemented the project "Peace education in Butare Province" jointly with the Rwandan Human Rights Commission (CRDH), a project which supports secondary school students and teachers in forming and organising human rights clubs.

For all the achievements of Mechthild Hommes and Timo Weinacht, the rumbling threat of ethnic conflict, AIDS and – particularly – the grinding poverty of Rwanda's children and young people are major problems. "It's difficult to talk about reconciliation, peace and human rights," Weinacht comments, "when it's impossible to meet even the most basic needs." This makes the interest of the children and young people in the workshops, seminars and training activities all the more surprising. It shows that the commitment of people like Mechthild Hommes and Timo Weinacht is bearing fruit. Fruit of hope and confidence. And the confidence is justified. The secret film watcher from Bihembe can confirm this. Her village has a new school now.



Chile

“The art of listening”, or the struggle for land in Bio-Bio

Their name means “people of the land” and they speak the language of the land – the Mapuche, one of the last original habitants of Chile. The land – “mapu” – is more for them than merely a basis for living. The earth is holy. It is the place where their predecessors are buried, where their gods live, the origin of their symbolic rites, and the source of their faith. It is the material basis of their history and their cultural life. If the Mapuche lose this land, they lose not only their home but their identity and their culture. A culture which they have successfully defended for five centuries. First against the Inca empire, then against the Spanish, and finally against the Chilean oligarchy. They fought for their land when Chile’s independence unleashed a witch hunt

against the “Indios”, and for their very existence when Pinochet ordered the division of their land between large landowners and forestry companies.

They have not emerged unscathed. Only a few hectares south of the BioBio river remain of the land their forefathers once owned. Today, the Mapuche are having to defend even this last small corner. Not against colonial rulers or dictators, but against the weapons of modern democracy: forestry machinery, bulldozers and chainsaws. This is difficult. Because the wood industry has very powerful allies in Chile.

For the Chilean state and the national export industry, the large wood companies are so important that the needs of the local population

are often swept under the carpet of industrial interests. With the “Ley Indígena” (Indigenous Peoples Act) in 1993 the government committed to respect, protect and assist the development of the Indian communities. However, the reality is still very different. Trucks rumble through the forests, the company forestry machinery destroys the paths without giving a thought to the inhabitants, the natural vegetation disappears, and pines and eucalyptus dry out the soil.

The Mapuche respond by occupying the land, blocking logging work and demonstrating – the means of a people condemned by history to political invisibility. Sometimes fires are set in the plantations or forestry machinery is damaged. However, it is doubtful that the Mapuche are always responsible. There is a powerful interest in profiling them publicly as terrorists. And this is not difficult. Even unfounded accusations can lead to imprisonment. The background to this is the widespread racist attitude towards the indigenous population in Chile. The Mapuche are dismissed as “criminal”, “lazy”, “worthless”. A prejudice which is unfortunately shared by many employees in local administrations and the police, and is the greatest obstacle on the way to mutual understanding. This demands even more patience and diplomatic skill from those trying to help break through the logjam of the opposing actors’ opinions. In five years of tireless community-based work, ZFD’s Gesine Kaiser and Hans Willi Nolden have shown a great deal of both.

Gaining trust

The two – an anthropologist and a lawyer/political scientist– started work in BioBio in October 2001. Together with the association of the three local authorities Contulmo, Cañete und Tirúa, they will help with transforming the conflicts over land. One goal is to make the public sector aware of the needs of the Mapuche population, another to assist the Mapuche communities in articulating their demands better, so that they can get a hearing from state and private entities.

This is easier said than done. Apart from the facts that the parties in Cono Sur are firmly entrenched and the association does not yet have any functioning structures, there is a great deal of mistrust here of outsiders – on both sides of the conflict.

Hans Willi Nolden and Gesine Kaiser are having to start virtually from scratch. They first have to gain the trust of all stakeholders – representatives of the state and industry just as much as the Mapuche communities. The key here is subtlety. “The art is to listen and not start wagging the finger, German style,” Nolden says. “Something like that’s completely pointless when you’re trying to get rid of the fictions you find everywhere in this conflict.” To understand the positions of the parties to the conflict and then win the parties over for their own work, Nolden and Kaiser will start by meeting a whole number of important actors. The mayors of the three municipalities, the municipal administrations, the police director, and several wood industry companies, and naturally also important leaders of Mapuche organisations. The fact that the two are ready to listen to all those involved, including the state and industry representatives, is initially an unpleasant surprise for their local colleague Gloria Colipi. Colipi is a member of the indigenous political movement “Identidad Lafkenche”, and for Nolden and Kaiser is an essential guide in the thicket of “comunidades”. Her trust in the European duo’s approach is growing perceptibly. Once an office was found in Cañete and a second local colleague and a bus driver with local knowledge were hired, the strategy of intermediation starts to have visible effect.

This does not happen by itself. All the team have to work hard – there are more contacts to be made with the various parties to the conflict, existing contacts must be strengthened, and there are a number of field trips scheduled to advise the indígena communities. Given the desperate state of the roads, this is an adventure in itself at times. The events the team organise with the indígenas and the local administrations do not pretend to

settle the conflict over land, but instead seek to initiate and encourage dialogue between the various groups and cultures. "We're communicating skills, transformation and negotiating strategies which make possible a broader view and are prerequisites for a peaceful solution to the conflict over land," Gesine Kaiser says.

The public education and information work is particularly important. As the conflicts over land are not only the result but also to some extent the cause of the charged atmosphere between the parties, they have to be identified, documented and analysed. The project team tackles this job enthusiastically as well – a freelance cartographer is commissioned to study the changing occupation and ownership of indigena land, Gloria Colipi looks after a project database, and Nolden works with Professor Rodrigo Lillo of the Catholic University of Temuco on a legal and political analysis of the land conflicts, published in 2003.

Finally, the team's extraordinary commitment and constant willingness to listen to all those affected by the conflict have their own effect. In December 2002, just under a year from the start of the project, the mayors of the Cono Sur association of local authorities sign an agreement ("Convenio") on cooperation between the project team and the municipalities. The local media applaud, the Mapuche mayor from Tirúa, Adolfo Millabur, gives particular praise to the team's impartial position: "The good thing about this cooperation is that it involves an external initiative which is independent of the state, and is accordingly free from prejudices." The art of listening has proved its worth – from 2002 on, the team is not merely tolerated in Cono Sur, it is welcomed.

Training trainers

For Kaiser, Nolden and their helpers, the "Convenio" with Cono Sur provides both reassurance and motivation. They continue their training work intensively, and can soon see the easing of

tension when the rival groups meet at combined events. The network is growing as well. At the end of 2004, there are already forty Mapuche leaders ("dirigentes") cooperating with the project with Gesine Kaiser's support, each representing around fifty families. Meanwhile, Hans Willi Nolden has succeeded in integrating various leading management figures, organisations and church representatives along with farmers and the police in the training work. The project team has also been strengthened – another local colleague and a temporary young professional are helping coordinate the growing mountain of daily tasks.

One major success is cooperation with the government indigena authority, Corporación Nacional de Desarrollo Indígena (CONADI), which is headed by Mapuche and government representatives, operates interregionally, and brings the project to an audience beyond the boundaries of Cono Sur. Soon, Nolden is heading regular training and upgrading sessions in mediation and conflict transformation for CONADI staff. The team is also helping set up a documentation centre at the agency, which makes it possible to monitor land conflicts and intervene before they escalate in a spiral of violence. Working with multipliers like these is decisive for the project's sustainability – the ultimate goal is for the trained staff to continue working independently with the tools they have learned. "Our goal now is to strengthen the ability of the actors to resolve conflicts in a non-violent way," Gesine Kaiser explains. "The trained mediators in turn will then act as contacts for the groups involved, to promote conflict resolution and dialogue."

The chances that this concept will succeed when the project ends in October 2006 are good. Even if everything in Cono Sur is not as peaceful and harmonious as you might like to think. "A romantic German view of it would be that afterwards all the actors can sit around a table, talk and find solutions," Nolden smiles. "That's an illusion. What we can achieve is to get the idea across to the individual actors that we're looking at conflicts which have positive aspects as well."

The team has definitely succeeded here in the five years of its work in BioBio. With great patience and sensitivity, Gesine Kaiser and Hans Willi Nolden have actually managed to break down prejudices and develop concrete approaches with all stakeholders – the Mapuche as well as representatives of civil society, state and industry – which enable them to shape their future together. They have provided information, created networks, educated. Above all, they have tried to understand the viewpoint of all sides, and not allow themselves to be drawn into one camp or another. And this is the key to success, when the goal is to overcome prejudices. Because anyone working against prejudices cannot use the same methods as someone who is supporting those prejudices. This would simply substitute one set of assertions for another, transforming well-meaning and well-intentioned individuals into radicals in their turn. Gesine Kaiser and Hans Willi Nolden have learned to listen actively – as a proven way of countering prejudices.



Philippines

Ghosts, gangsters and good work: conflict management on Mindanao

The woman is a bundle of energy. Although it is already late afternoon on Mindanao when I ask her about her work, Annette Braun appears anything but tired on the phone. On the contrary – she is interested, open and motivated. She patiently answers my questions, even thoughtfully, reflecting on her own situation with an analytical edge which reveals astonishing vision in this early stage of the project. Braun, who has a doctorate in political science, has been working for ZFD for just under nine months at Balay Mindanaw, a local NGO which has been active since 1996 in the cause of economic and social development of various local communities in Misamis Oriental province.

The organisation focuses on the “barangays”, the smallest administrative unit in the Philippines (as Annette Braun explains), comparable with municipalities in developed countries, but with a significantly greater area. Here, Christian settlers live alongside the original inhabitants, the Higaonon-Lumads, an ethnic minority which resembles the Muslim population in having a disproportionately high incidence of poverty and disadvantage, the result of the unequal distribution of land which is the legacy of 377 years of Spanish colonial rule and which half a century of American control did not rectify. Competition for the increasingly scarce land has led to border disputes, family feuds and a level of mistrust be-

tween the different religious and ethnic groups – a major obstacle in Mindanao’s way to a better future. An important part of Balay Mindanaw’s work is accordingly to assist the barangays in the peaceful resolution of their conflicts, for example through legal advice and assistance on acquiring official title to land and also through direct intermediation and conflict management. “Here, Balay Mindanaw can really achieve something, particularly since the team has been working locally for several years and has the trust of the original inhabitants,” Annette Braun says. “I’ve already seen how neighbouring clans among the Higaonon have been feuding for years, which naturally seriously reduces the group’s ability to act. However, when Balay Mindanaw appeared as a neutral intermediary with a concrete goal that required a unanimous resolution by the community, the families went through a ceremony which ended their enmity. Even disputes over which river or forest edge their ancestors had established as the boundary between two areas have been resolved in a similar way.”

The terms “ceremony” and “ancestors” inevitably evoke images of bloody voodoo rituals, which not only remind me of the stereotypes in my own thinking but also confuse me somewhat, as I have read that the Lumads are now mostly converted to Christianity. “This is true,” explains Annette Braun, “but only superficially. If you scratch a little deeper, you find deeply rooted animism - people believe in witches and don't go out in the forest at night because they don't want to disturb the ghosts. Even so, you often see a picture of Christ as well in the tribal hall in a Higaonon community.” I find this very interesting and ask if she has direct personal experience of such Higaonon customs. She does, since she works regularly in three barangays in the Claveria commune, where many Higaonon-Lumads live alongside the Christian settlers.

Anybody who wants to work with these communities in the long term has to begin by winning the favour of the ancestors. As I learn to my astonishment, this is done in a ritual lasting

for hours in which blood really plays a role, the “singampo”. Two chickens and a pig are slaughtered, their blood is mixed and painted on the hand with a feather, while the “datus”, or tribal chiefs, chant a “dasang” to ask the ancestors for their support in productive and harmonious cooperation. Conversely, the newcomer is asked to pray in their own faith, then people eat the chicken and the chiefs repeat the “dasang”. What seems very alien to me is now almost standard practice for Annette Braun. She has taken part in this ceremony three times so far, showing respect to the indigenous people – not easy for her as a vegetarian. One thing is certain – Annette Braun is not squeamish.

Tribal hall and tax collection

My impression that Annette Braun is fully committed to her work is confirmed as she tells me about her current projects in Claveria. Here, some hour and a half from Cagayan de Oro, the head office of the organisation, she spends half her time talking to representatives of the local administration in the town hall or visiting the remote, mist-shrouded mountain villages, most of which take hours to reach on foot - a sporting challenge. In Minalwang, where the inhabitants are almost all Higaonon, she now has a permanent sleeping place in the “tulugan”, the new tribal hall built with DED funding, which plays a special role in traditional conflict resolution. “It is very important to have a fixed place where the Higaonon can practise their traditional law,” she tells me, “because the existence of this place means that conflicts which require the process of traditional law are taken more seriously.”

Among the Higaonon, many crimes can be atoned for through ceremonies of forgiveness, from minor transgressions all the way to murder. The stronger the role of this traditional law, the better. The perpetrator can avoid a possible lengthy jail sentence, and the load on the courts is also eased. As I discover, there have been “lupon tagapamayapa” all over the Philippines since

1991, mediation committees at district level that deal with minor crimes under local law. "If there is also a tribal house where conflicts – including serious ones – can be dealt with in traditional manner, this naturally takes even more of the load off the courts," Annette Braun says. The tulgugan in Minalwang is a complete success in any case. As the focus of cultural life, it has become a symbolic site where Higaonon traditions can be lived and preserved. Besides negotiations under traditional law, there will in future be courses on folk customs, ranging from conflict management and farming methods to tribal dances and crafts. Another reason why this is an important measure is that the culturally strengthened self-confidence also enhances the community's ability to act.

The barangays' ability to act and self responsibility are also the focus of another project which Annette Braun and her team have taken on in Claveria – involving the barangay "captains" (the district headmen) in collecting local land tax. "You have to know first that Claveria covers around 40,000 hectares, which makes collecting land tax difficult for the officials of the city administration simply for geographical reasons," she explains. "Only around 30 per cent of the assessed land tax can be collected just now, and even this is very cost and time intensive. For each peso of revenue, just under nine pesos have to be spent on collection. This is why it's important to involve the barangay chiefs actively in the process of collecting land tax. They are on the spot and have a better overview of the land ownership, so that their involvement benefits both sides in the long term. Something else to bear in mind is that around 25 per cent of all land tax collected flows back to the districts." In addition, this approach avoids conflicts because the process of give and take between municipality and district becomes more transparent. Naturally, Balay Mindanaw cannot implement this project on its own – close cooperation with the responsible authorities is needed here.

Annette Braun has already made the necessary contacts with the local authority and provin-

cial administration. Initial discussions have been held with the tax assessors, numbers compared and manuals reviewed – with success. There are good prospects that the project can be implemented in stages. For the staff of Balay Mindanaw, cooperation with the administration is a novelty, as they usually operate exclusively at district level. Here, Annette Braun functions as an intermediary, and tries to focus the team's methodological approach to cooperation with the authorities as well. She does this carefully and with lots of sensitivity, as like the other staff, she too is expected to fit into the team. A high degree of commitment is desirable at Balay Mindanaw, solo initiatives are viewed critically.

Possibilities and limits

It is clear from our conversation that Annette Braun has given much thought to the possibilities and limits of her work at Balay Mindanaw. She has now developed a clearer sense of what is feasible and what not. "It wasn't entirely simple to integrate ourselves at first," she tells me. "We first had to get a sense of how people here work, and what's expected of us." By we, Annette Braun also means her German ZFD colleague, Svenja Schmelcher, who assists the organisation with public relations and fundraising, and who she has regular exchanges with. For both, the Filipino style of working and approach were initially unfamiliar, "particularly because everything here also has a certain entertainment value, where we're much more objective and analytic in Germany," explains Annette Braun. "There are also certain conflicts you don't talk about. They're 'delicado', as people here say, in other words too dangerous to make an issue. As an outsider you aren't culturally integrated enough, for example, to hold training sessions yourself, because you're always in danger of stumbling into a minefield."

Annette Braun needs to be careful in her work with the Higaonon communities as well, particularly because there are not only cultural barriers but also language barriers. Although she

now speaks Cebuano, which is widespread in Mindanao, the Higaonon have their own language, so that she has to rely on an interpreter. In a speech (interpreted by a colleague), she once deliberately pushed the limits and offered to carry out a conflict study for the Higaonon community. The reaction was restrained, as expected. “The Higaonon have strong reservations about talking about their fears and conflicts with an outsider,” she says. “Particularly since these involve not only real threats but also irrational fears, of witches and nature spirits for example, and secret customs that they don’t share with outsiders, particularly those who don’t speak any Higaonon.” Despite these cultural barriers, the young European woman’s commitment is very much appreciated, and she is now a welcome visitor to the Higaonon communities.

I ask if she feels any fear during her stays in the remote barangays – after all, Mindanao is notorious for rebel activities during which the occasional foreign tourist disappears. “Generally, the security situation is stable, and if you stick to the rules, nothing’s going to happen,” she says simply. “The important thing is for the district headman to know when I’m there and where I’m spending the night.”

The woman is not only a bundle of energy, but also quite courageous – neither ghosts nor gangsters seem able to scare her. It is not surprising that despite her brief time in the field, she has managed to create a solid basis for continuing her work. Her schedule is crowded. Besides implementing the land tax project and working with the Higaonon, Annette Braun will in future advise the district mediators, give lectures on decentralisation and federalism, and present various conflict resolution modules under a peace education programme for the Philippine armed forces – a project she is particularly enthusiastic about because the initiative came from the armed forces themselves, as she tells me. I am impressed. And after our discussion, all the more convinced that Annette Braun will achieve still more on Mindanao. Not only because she is motivated, capa-

ble and fearless. But because she always manages to make positive use of her position as an outsider for her work, reviews her own role critically, and with her extraordinary feeling for cultural subtleties can make a pragmatic assessment of what she actually can achieve.



Ecuador

Conflict management in the struggle against the chainsaws

Esmeraldas – the most northwest of Ecuador’s twenty provinces. The name means “emerald”, and could not be a better choice for the region. Here, between the Pacific coast and the Columbian border, the entire landscape is covered by an intensive and brilliant green. From the mangroves by the ocean to the rain forests there are constant new surprises. Spectacular plants found nowhere else on earth, a diversity of species which has overwhelmed many a researcher. Exotic flowers grow between the giant trees in the rain forests, big and small rivers snake through the hills, transforming suddenly into mighty waterfalls. The song of the cicadas and the sporadic croak of the brilliantly coloured poison

arrow frogs are part of the normal sound of the rain forest. Here and there you see a sloth hanging lethargically in the trees, sometimes a bird spider scurries across the path. Butterflies the size of side plates and iridescent blue dragonflies flit past, and in the distance you can hear the cries of hooter monkeys. An idyllic picture.

But the rain forest world of Esmeraldas is not nearly as harmonious as it seems at first glance. What visitors see as a fascinating natural spectacle has become a living space under serious threat for the inhabitants. The wealth of natural resources, particularly fine woods which can be sold at high prices, has not only attracted industry

but also settlers looking for fertile soil. The frightful result is that wood companies are now trucking a steady flow of tropical wood from the rain forest, settlers are clearing the forest for arable land, and large landowners are doing the same in order to extend their oil palm holdings. The problem is not only the worrying decline in the forest stocks, but also the fact that the land being worked already has an owner – the long-standing communities who have lived and worked on the land for generations, and whose livelihood is under increasing threat.

Under Ecuadorian law, private individuals, individual communities and companies can have land transferred to them if they have cultivated it for an unbroken period of five years, provided the land is not already taken. However, the government is not as careful as it might be in granting title to land, so that there may be two or more justified claims to a single piece of land. The result is violent arguments between the various groups about rights of use. The struggle is unequal. The communities of indigenas and Afro-Ecuadorians are generally at a disadvantage against the corporations in particular – this is a David and Goliath situation. An additional fact is that their negotiating position is generally further weakened by additional disputes between themselves and with the settlers. This is not a good basis for sustainable management of the rain forest. For this, the various parties must first learn to settle their conflicts peaceably. And this is where Volker Frank comes in.

Growing dialogue cultures

For three years the sociologist and development specialist has been working with the team from the indigenous Unidad Coordinadora para el Desarrollo Forestal Sostenible de la Provincia de Esmeraldas (UC). The Coordination Unit for Sustainable Development of the Forest in Esmeraldas Province was formed in 1995 to coordinate the activities of the various organisations working in the region, in order to bundle their strength in

the struggle against the ongoing destruction of the rain forest. It is made up of representatives of government institutions, national and international NGOs and the wood industry association. It becomes quickly clear that sustainable and responsible management of the rain forest can only function if something is done about the conflicts between the individual user groups.

The necessary professional knowhow is supplied by the Civil Peace Service in October 2001 in the form of Volker Frank. Together with the staff of the UC, Frank has the job of promoting readiness to engage in dialogue among the rival actors and strengthening the negotiating position of the indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian communities in particular. This is an ambitious undertaking, as scarcity of land and prejudices have seriously eroded the social bonds between the various groups and ethnic communities over the years. As a result, Volker Frank works closely with his local colleague Edgardo Prado right from the start. “Orientation from a local expert who’s familiar with the cultural context was very important,” he says. “Particularly in direct intervention at local community level, the cultural peculiarities of the various groups had to be taken into account.”

The cooperation is indeed working well, as the two experts complement each other superbly. While Prado comes from Esmeraldas and is very well able to evaluate the problems between the individual parties to the conflict and ethnic groups, Frank brings a wealth of knowledge and experience in conflict management. The result is a whole range of measures. First, there are the seminars and advanced training sessions held by Frank and his team on topics and techniques in civil conflict transformation. These are aimed primarily at the representatives of civil society organisations and local administrations, but are also integrated into training programmes for local management run by local community-based organisations. This is a good strategy, as ultimately the trainees have to function in the long term as autonomous multipliers for peaceful conflict reso-

lution processes. The plan takes off. Soon, the former participants have formed two working groups to apply what they have learned independently in various environmental conflicts.

But this alone is not enough. In addition to the specialist training, the aim is to plant the delicate seedling of dialogue culture in Esmeraldas' luxuriant vegetation. For this, Volker Frank helps organising and preparing events on various environmental topics to which all rival actors are invited, from NGOs and grassroots organisations to public entities and private sector companies. Although the latter have limited interest, the discussions are very constructive. The meetings give birth to three permanent dialogue fora which Frank and his team coordinate and support. For example, the water issue is an important topic, as clean water has long been a problem in Esmeraldas. As a result, the first steps are taken towards creating a tribunal to prevent possible water distribution conflicts. This is one of many local activities which Frank and his team supply the necessary spark for.

While Volker Frank can do some of the work in the office, other measures require his physical presence in the field. This is particularly the case when the project team intervenes in local disputes. Then the motor boat has to be prepared, because many of the indigena and Afro-Ecuadorian communities can only be reached by water. "Holding a single workshop can take up to three days," Frank explains. This makes it all the more rewarding when the intervention is successful and together with the parties to the conflict solutions can be found that are acceptable to all involved.

For example in Arenales, a small Afro-Ecuadorian community of 180 inhabitants on the banks of the Rio Onzole. Here, two groups can document rights of use in one and the same piece of land – a classic explosive situation. One year after the community officially received title in its land, the settlers arrived with titles for the same land. As a result, all contact was broken off with the "colonos". Now, they no longer come into

the village, even to buy things. Their children do not go to the school, the community feels threatened. In addition, there are quarrels among the community members themselves, including about logging. The sale of wood is profitable, and poses a temptation even if community rules say that logging is only permitted in personal emergencies, and then only with the permission of the village headman.

Volker Frank and his team face a dual challenge in Arenales. Particularly since the community has very high expectations of the "outside mediators". "Many of them thought we were there as a sort of fire brigade to solve the community's problems," Frank explains. "It took some work to make it clear to people that they had to learn with our help to solve their own conflicts." Once this problem is solved, things go well. Frank and Prado hold several workshops, which even the village children attend. The community conflicts are discussed by the villagers, the community rules collected and set down in writing. Finally, they even succeed in finding a solution with the settlers.

Time for growth

In all, Frank and his team have intervened in four conflicts over land at the local authority level. Not all are so successful – in one case, the community decided to continue the dispute through the courts. Nevertheless, the seed that Volker Frank has planted in three years of collaboration with the UC has fallen on fertile ground. It has grown to the point where it is now being autonomously tended by the UC staff in Esmeraldas. The fact that this is possible is due not least to the complete reorganisation of the organisation (now UCE), which Volker Frank made a very committed contribution towards. The trained multipliers have now set up a mediation system which has been advised by a gender expert since 2004, and the information centre started by Frank and Prado for the UCE member organisations has also proved its worth. "El Chiparo", the

periodic bulletin sheet created during the collaboration, is still in existence, as is an interactive CD which carefully documents the learning process the project has been through in carrying out the training and upgrading measures. Finally, the UCE has also taken over coordination of the forum on water issues.

Volker Frank has helped make all this happen – although several factors did make project work more difficult. For example, there was the increased activity by Colombian guerrillas on the border, which not only brought a lot of military to Esmeraldas but also Colombian refugees, who settled on the already scarce land and intensified the conflicts. The great imbalance of power in Esmeraldas, the poverty and the government's industry-friendly policy were also less than ideal conditions for successful conflict transformation. Nevertheless, the foundations have been laid. Now, the UCE team has to keep up the work. Their job is to persevere with the techniques of civil conflict transformation, so that disputes can be resolved peacefully and the right of the communities to an inviolate living space is preserved. This is the only way to prevent violent escalation of the land conflicts in Esmeraldas in the long term. And where politics has failed, this is also the only way to achieve sustainable management of the rain forest. Not through state regulation and legislation, but through local and concerted action.



Sudan

In the shadow of violence – the story of Sanam-El-Naga

Nyala, June 2004. Rain is beating on the roof of the office building. Actually, the rain is a good sign, as this transforms the dusty wasteland of Darfur into a landscape of hills and fields covered in lush green. But not even the rain brings relief. The smell of violence hangs over the streets, it is quiet in Nyala. Some offices are cleared, many of the international aid organisations have already evacuated their staff.

Thoughtfully, Alain Sitchet also packs his things. Later in the day, he will also board an aircraft that will take him to safety in Khartoum in the north of the country – a temporary measure until the situation in Darfur is under control again. Nobody knows when this will be. It is even possible that Alain Sitchet will never be able to

return to Nyala. He thinks of the people in Sanam-El-Naga, exiles in their own country, who have just started to live and hope again. Will they have to flee again, as they did when the armed riders attacked their villages in the south? Straggle through the savannah again for days, weeks, months, without water or food? These are questions that Alain Sitchet cannot put out of his mind. For several years, he and his predecessor Wilhelm Böttrich have done their utmost with many other helpers to create a better future for these people. Now, everything is up in the air again. The uncertainty is the worst. Here, in Sudan, one of the world's most politically unstable regions.

Nyala, March 2001. The ground is hot enough to fry an egg when Wilhelm Böttrich disembarks from the plane. Two years of hard work lie ahead in an ambitious joint project of the DED, Oxfam Great Britain and Save the Children UK. Some four thousand refugee families from the south Sudan are to be resettled in a relatively uninhabited area in south Darfur. The new settlers are displaced members of the Dinka people, African livestock farmers, and with three or four million members the largest ethnic group in south Sudan, who for generations have been locked in a bitter war against the Arabic-Islamic north. A war which has claimed 1.5 million lives. More than five million people are refugees in their own country. The government in Khartoum intends to be Arab, not African, and wants to convert the whole country to Islam – gun in hand, if necessary.

In the south of the country, the struggle between government troops and the south Sudanese rebels has long since expanded to include clashes between the rebels, with the government skilfully exploiting the interests of individual ethnic groups. Somewhere in the middle of all this, the civilian population is starving. Those driven from their villages repeat the same story. Armed men came, burned their huts, destroyed food and seed. Those who survived are taken prisoner, raped or sold into slavery. Those who are able to escape try to make their way through the sweltering wasteland to one of the refugee camps in the north – days of trekking without food which take their toll of victims. In the camps, the survivors' most basic needs are met. But living conditions are difficult here, and this is only a temporary home.

The new resettlement programme in south Darfur is intended to help the refugees find new prospects. They are given land which they can cultivate themselves, and help with setting up and organising a functioning community structure. They are to be settled some 80 kilometres south of Nyala, in Sanam-El-Naga. Several African communities inhabit the region who belong to the Misseryia Jebel, living mainly from livestock

farming. The programme accordingly involves some potential for conflict, not only because of the ethnic differences between existing and new settlers, but also because of potential disputes over water and land. The new settlers are also supported by aid measures by international organisations, which can again arouse envy and discontent among neighbouring communities.

All in all, Wilhelm Böttrich is facing a demanding task. Together with a local colleague, he will set up a Social Monitoring Unit (SMU) as part of the project, which will promote peaceful coexistence between the new settlers and the existing neighbouring communities and identify and avert conflicts at an early stage. This means not only monitoring all social processes carefully, but also raising the awareness of the project organisations' staff for peaceful conflict resolution. Starting in May 2001, the ZFD sociologist tackles both challenges with a lot of energy.

Sanam-El-Naga, July 2002. The empty desert roads are flooded, the rain has turned the soil into a morass. Even so, Wilhelm Böttrich visits as often as possible. The first settlers have now arrived in Sanam-El-Naga. They are fewer than planned, only some 500 of the scheduled 2,000 Dinka families. The helpers are waiting for the promised EU funds, and even sinking wells for drinking water is proving more difficult than expected, so that the resettlement is being delayed. Nevertheless, the SMU has already made itself indispensable for the whole project. In numerous discussions with the new settlers and members of the host communities, Böttrich and his helpers have assembled important information on the people's needs and expectations, which they discuss with project management of the project executing agencies at regular meetings. "The SMU was a sort of ear for the project, documenting the settlers' concerns, passing them on to the project management and providing feedback," Böttrich explains. "This made it possible to avoid some tension and coordinate the work better, particularly on drinking water supplies and settlement planning."

The SMU advises the consortium of aid organisations on many activities. For example, Böttrich and his local colleague have established a credit committee and an agricultural extension service – institutions meant to make it easier for settler families to achieve autonomy. In practice, however, the work of the SMU is not so easy. The mountain of tasks is growing daily, making it difficult for two people to handle, and the information flow between SMU and project management is not always optimal. In addition, as long as three quarters of the new settlers are still missing, it is virtually impossible to initiate measures contributing to a functioning community structure.

Everything has been going well so far – the neighbours are peaceful, there is a community development centre which the settlers built themselves with SMU help, and which is now being used intensively for events by all involved. Wilhelm Böttrich can be satisfied with his work. But he also knows that time is running out. The project is scheduled to phase out at the close of 2003. An extension is essential if sustainability of the measures is to be ensured. And then there is still the constant uncertainty about the settlers' security. There are marauding bands and rebels in Darfur as well. Worried, Wilhelm Böttrich gets into the jeep and drives back to the office at Nyala. There is still much to be done.

Sanam-El-Naga, November 2003. The village scene is lively. Under the scorching sun, people are hammering, sawing and building; here and there, you can even hear children's laughter – a sign of the confidence people have developed here. Alain Sitchet and his team are now looking after 1,910 families. The political scientist took over from Böttrich as head of the SMU in February, the project has been extended for two years. Today, Sitchet will lead another workshop for the settlers' management committee on conflict transformation at the community development centre – just one of many activities which the SMU is now engaged in. The unit is now a real team – a Dinka Agar from Rumbek and a woman

from Nubia in the north of the country act as assistants, and there are two field workers as well, both Dinka. They are permanently at the site, which eases Sitchet's coordination and communication work – including with project management – a little.

And there is plenty to coordinate. For example, socially weaker groups – young people and women – are to be assisted in forming initiatives, a measure which requires a great deal of sensitivity in view of the patriarchal structure of Dinka society. Settlers' questions about possibilities for adult education and setting up a kindergarten are forwarded and handled jointly with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and Save the Children. Sitchet and his team are also now supporting the settlers on all questions of community organisation. In addition, they naturally have to keep an eye on the social evolution of Sanam-El-Naga. With so many people, minor conflicts are inevitable now, but mostly they can be resolved peacefully. Not the least reason for this is that the SMU's commitment has won its high esteem among all those involved. It functions as a contact, intermediary and adviser all at once. This is a role in which Sitchet and his team have proved themselves, particularly during the first security crisis. This year the settlers were subject to repeated attacks by armed nomads, Arabic Rizeigat, who stole 100 goats, several cows and a horse cart. The situation threatened to escalate when the settlers showed increased readiness to defend themselves. "Fortunately, we were able to solve the problem in close cooperation with the other units and through intensive lobbying," Sitchet comments.

But the SMU did more than this. It also ensured that more security forces will be on hand in the settlement in future. In numerous meetings Sitchet and his team have succeeded in persuading the authorities to send more police, and train 15 young settlers at the Nyala police academy for assignment to the settlement. The security forces are now permanently on patrol – on horseback, which the SMU is also responsible for. Even so,

Alain Sitchet is uneasy. The attacks seem to be the first signs of a new wave of violence. The newly-commenced peace negotiations between the government and the rebels in the south have aroused the ambitions of various civil war parties in the west, so that of late there have been increasingly frequent bloody battles in Darfur between rebels and Arab mounted militias. Several towns in north Darfur have already been attacked, the road from Nyala to Sanam-El-Naga is now frequently blocked. If the situation escalates further, it will no longer be possible to assist the settlers. Just as they are beginning to find new courage, and are ready to look to the future again. Worried, Sitchet goes into the community development centre.

Khartoum, January 2005. Every day, new reports of horrors reach the capital from Darfur. There are constant reports of new attacks by rebels or Arab mounted troops. This Arab militia, the so-called “janjaweed”, has yet to be disarmed. Instead, the official police and militia seem to be cooperating. They plunder, drive people off and kill, the whole tragedy of the south seems to be repeating in the west of the country. Two Save the Children workers were killed in a mine explosion in December, two more were shot by the rebels. After Oxfam and the DED, this organisation has now pulled the rest of its workers out of the region. The people in Sanam-El-Naga have been left to themselves since the end of 2004, the project had to be shut down early.

Like all those involved, Alain Sitchet can only hope now. Hope that the settlement is spared further attacks, that the security forces live up to their name, that all the effort was not for nothing. Meanwhile, work on new projects is starting to pile up on his desk, projects which he will coordinate from Khartoum in future. The south in particular needs help for the post-war phase after the peace treaty. And in the light of the successful work of the SMU in Sanam-El-Naga, it can be assumed that the concept will prove its worth in reintegrating returned refugees. Alain Sitchet will have plenty to do in future. But

his days will be shadowed by worries about the people of Sanam-El-Naga. Until the terror finally ends. Until the people in Darfur are safe again, and their children can laugh again. When that will be, nobody knows. Soon, “inshallah” – God willing!



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