People Building Peace

Transforming Violent Conflict
in South Asia

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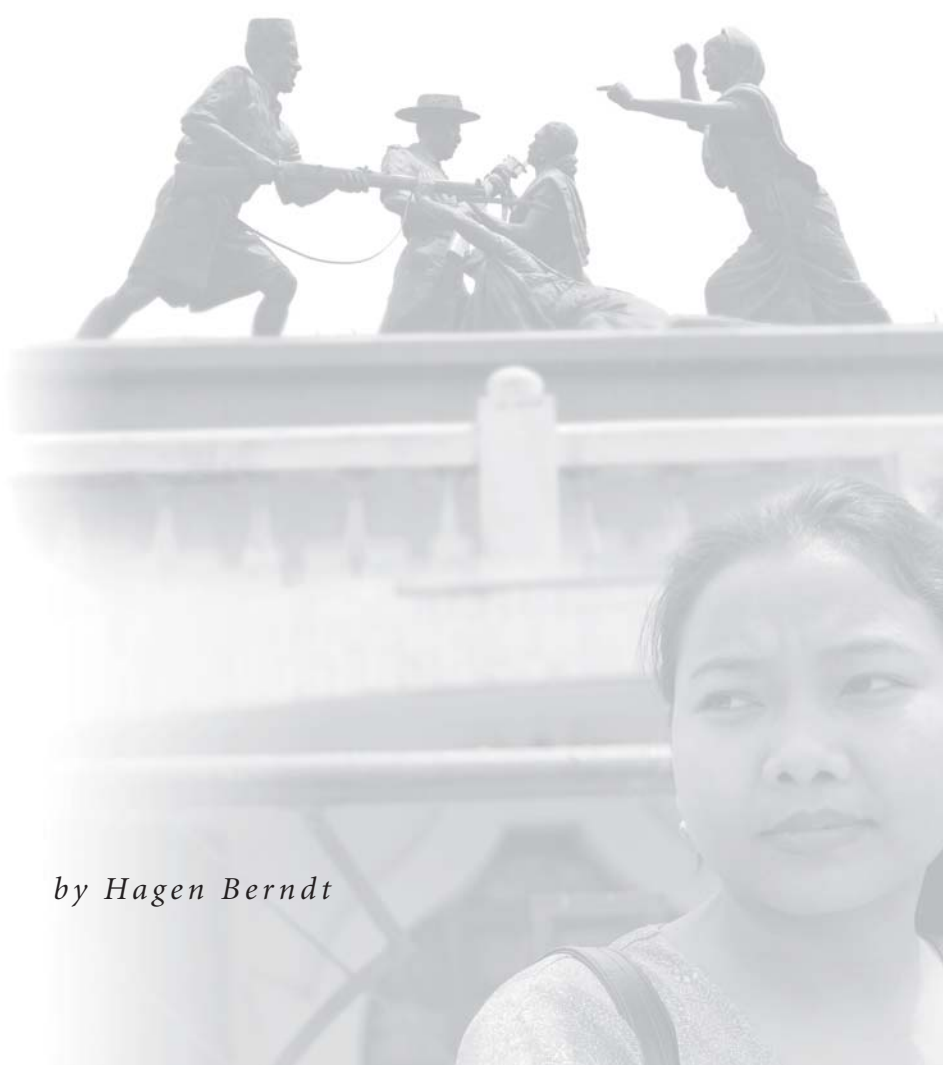
by Hagen Berndt

Contents

Learning with EED Partner Organizations

Background

In the second half of the last century the churches in Europe and North America started to address worldwide poverty and its root causes as part of their responsibility to contribute to a just and human global society. During the Ecumenical Conference in Uppsala in 1968, the commitment to recognising the human rights of the poor and oppressed and the commitment to economic justice were asserted. As early as 1973, the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) published a policy paper titled "The Development Service of the Church – A Contribution Towards Peace and Justice in the World", which clearly propounded three fundamental concerns – peace, justice, and development – and described their interrelatedness.

EED understands development as a process towards liberation from hunger, poverty and disease, and from unjust power structures, which violate people's dignity and rights and prevent them from control over their vital resources.

EED's objectives include the commitment to empower those who are poor, disadvantaged and oppressed for the betterment of their living conditions by their own efforts and in their own responsibility; to enable people to participate in decision-making processes by strengthening civil society; to assert political, civil, economic, social and cultural human rights; to create equal opportunities for women and men and eliminate existing gender disparities and to promote peace and overcome violence.

Since the 1990s the question as to how development efforts by non-governmental actors can intentionally contribute to conflict transformation and peace-building has become more pressing and a major issue of discussion. In South Asia, where EED cooperates with partner organisations in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan, many of these partner organisations were challenged by increasingly violent conflict situations in their working areas. Many of them started linking development work to peace-building and conflict transformation and felt the challenge to systematically analyse how their work affects violent conflict, either positively or negatively.

EED, along with our partner organisations in South Asia, became more aware that striving for peace does not simply aim at abolishing war and violence. It aims at overcoming all forms of violence, especially structural

violence through unjust political and economic structures. It also aims at overcoming gender-based violence rooted in the norms, values, structures and practices of patriarchal societies.

We became aware of the fact that an increased ability of poor and marginalised communities to determine their own destiny or the use of their right to participate in political decision-making may lead to conflict. Therefore, conscious efforts must be made to ensure that the necessary transformation of societies can be achieved through constructive and non-violent change.

We are convinced that "development" must be perceived today as a systematic effort to overcome the causes of poverty and of violence at the same time. This poses the challenge of finding ways and building structures for constructive and non-violent management of inevitable conflict. Peace, therefore, is not just a welcome side effect of successful development; it is its intended impact.

Therefore, it was decided to put special emphasis on increasing the capacities of EED partner organisations as well as of EED itself in dealing with development, peace and conflict transformation in South Asia through a three-year focused programme 'Peace in South Asia' (PISA) from 2003-2005, in which about 50 South Asian partner organisations participated.

The PISA programme included a diverse range of activities in the fields of

- **conflict-sensitive analysis and planning**
- **dealing with communalism in South Asia**
- **strengthening peace-building capacities in selected regions where violent conflict is immanent (e.g. North East India, Chittagong Hill Tracts, Nepal)**
- **conceptual understanding of root causes and gender dimensions of violent conflict and the role of civil society therein**
- **exchange programmes and lobby activities vis-à-vis the European public**

In the course of the PISA activities, it was felt that there is great potential in learning from each other's experiences in South Asia, in exploring differences and similarities and in opportunities to use the learning of partners with diverse backgrounds in order to further improve approaches. EED chose eight partner organisations, presenting a diversity of approaches, regions and experiences, whose experiences in dealing with violent conflicts are documented in this publication. This in itself became a learning process as it required reflection and self-evaluation, to be able to come forward with findings and insights. In early 2005, EED invited Mr Hagen Berndt, who has been interested in the social movements in South Asia and peace and justice issues for the past 27 years, to take part in this process of reflection. He engaged as an active listener with each of the organisations who contributed to this volume. He has held discussions with the selected partner organisations and documented their work and their learning as presented here.

We are therefore now presenting a documentation of experiences of EED partner organisations in working in and on violent conflict and for human development in the South Asian context, hoping to contribute to an informed practice and theory based on grassroots experiences of highly committed individuals and civil society organisations.

Learning from Experience

Churches, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society organisations (CSOs) across the world have always been aware of the fact that they are working in the context of social, economic, political or cultural conflict. For most of them development efforts were conceived as a contribution towards building more just, sustainable and peaceful societies. For a long time they have catered for the victims of violent conflict, have assisted them in raising their voices and have lobbied political actors at local, national, regional, and international levels for peaceful settlement of violent confrontation.

By the early 1990ies it became evident that the "peace dividend" many had hoped for after the end of the Cold War was not forthcoming. Quite in contrast to general expectations conflict situations became more complex, actors, agendas, interests were more confusing and established international mechanisms of dealing with violent conflict seemed to be increasingly less effective. Churches, NGOs and CSOs at the same time realized that their efforts – while doing good – were also having a negative impact on the context and dynamics of conflict. Thus, they were challenged in two

ways: discovering new and creative ways of addressing issues of conflict and even violence within their own societies with their own means (in the absence of effective international or other mechanisms of conflict trans-formation and management) and developing a better understanding of the impact of their work on conflict and learning how to at least avoid nega-tive impact.

In South Asia EED is cooperating with a wide variety of partners in four countries (Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Pakistan). Each of them is work-ing in different contexts, engaging in different ways to contribute towards the building of peaceful, just and sustainable societies. Each of the partners has addressed the specific challenges of social, economic, political, and cul-tural violence in the area where they are working. Doing that, each of them has developed strategies and approaches, skills and methods.

Practical Experience Contains Important Lessons

EED became aware of these processes and therefore initiated the "Peace in South Asia"- (PISA) process, which has provided an opportunity for new insights and learning. One lesson that EED has taken from this process is that – as a supporting organization working together with partners world wide – EED has a unique opportunity to provide such opportunities of mutual sharing and learning. Being a partner in a complex situation is not only maintaining constructive bilateral relations but using the multitude of relations to link people and organisations together, providing space and opportunity for sharing, learning, and networking. Another lesson is that practitioners "in the field" have a tremendous wealth of sound knowledge and experience that must be tapped in order to improve skills and methods of dealing with conflict, but also to develop theoretical under-standing. Knowledge based on scientific research and theory must be com-plemented by practical knowledge growing from experience.

Being "Non Partisan" But not Being "Neutral"

A general learning from the experience of EED's partners in South Asia is that confronting violence and playing a constructive role in transforming conflict requires an organisation to critically assess its own position and role in the context of conflict. For many local organisations this is a diffi-cult, sometime painful challenge. In practice, this does not mean that an organizations has to be "neutral". Quite in contrast to the commonly held assumption that conflict intervention requires neutrality the experience of

EED's partners shows that a local actor can in fact play a constructive role while at the same time not being neutral to the issues at stake. Human rights organizations found approaches and strategies for deescalating violence and transforming conflict while being very clear and firm about issues of justice, rule of law and human rights. What is required is rather maintaining a non-partisan position and role. For local organisations this may perhaps be more difficult than for external actors. But the experience of EED's partners in South Asia demonstrates that they have found effective mechanisms and strategies to protect themselves from either taking or being pushed into a partisan role (p 47ff).

No Blueprint – But Variety

Many local NGOs and churches have to deal with the fact that conflicts in their societies have escalated into violence. Next to assisting the victims of violence reducing or stopping violence is a primary concern. A lesson learned from the PISA process is that there is not one strategy or blueprint. Rather, local organisations have used a variety of approaches and strategies. Strategies and approaches were adjusted and changed as the dynamics of the conflict required.

Responding to the specific challenges in each situation and their changes over time in the course of a conflict is a tremendous challenge for practitioners. It requires the ability to continuously observe the events unfolding in the course of a conflict, to assess their meaning, to analyse their impacts and to design strategies to adjust one's activities to the changing environment. The experience form South Asia show that local organisations have developed skills and methods for monitoring and analysing the conflict. They have also developed skills and methods for designing and adjusting their strategies of intervention.

Gender is an Intrinsic Element of Violent Conflict

Stating that conflict affects men and women differently nowadays has become a banality. It is surprising, however, to see that in many situations the gender dimension of conflict is still not adequately addressed. However, the experience from South Asia shows that working with a gender perspective is not a luxury. Through application of a gender perspective, conflict analysis may come to different results. Often, transforming violent conflict requires to address cultural,social and sexual violence within the society. Gender relations have a strong impact both on processes of escala-

tion as well as on de-escalation of violence. Building capacities within a society to deal with contradictions and tensions in constructive ways also requires changing gender roles and gender relations. Roles, values, norms, images, symbols and structures that justify and legitimise discrimination based on gender definitions must be exposed and transformed. Such essential changes in gender relations may seem to be impossible when a society is engulfed in armed conflict. However, the experience of South Asian organisations demonstrates that gender injustice is a root cause of violent conflict – changing gender relations is therefore an important mechanism for building peace (p. 87 ff).

Building on Local Strengths

Several of EED's partner organisations have demonstrated in their work that within each situation of – sometimes violent – social, economic, political or cultural conflict there are also capacities for peace. They have designed strategies to mobilize these forces for peace within their societies, enabling communities to resist provocation for violence and rather to use constructive ways of dealing with differences and tensions (p. 68ff).

Discovering such indigenous capacities for peace and finding adequate ways of reinforcing and strengthening them in several of the examples from South Asia has proven to be an effective approach to transforming violent conflict in a sustainable manner. An important lesson to be learned from the South Asian experience is that nobody will bring about somebody else's peace. Peace must grow from within – and it must be built by the people.

Peace is Built by Many ...

Another lesson from the South Asian experience is that peace – if it is to be sustainable – is a permanent 'construction site' where many different actors with their different talents work together for a common objective. Building peace requires the ability to build alliances, to be part of a network and to work in partnership. Violent conflict is always affected by both internal actors, agendas and issues as well as external interests, actors and agendas. Therefore, building peace must also involve actors external to the conflict who are working at regional or international levels. However, experience also shows that external actors in peace building may also disempower local actors and thereby undermine the sustainability of conflict transformation. South Asian organizations have gained experiences confronting

conflict at various levels through alliance building, networking and build-
ing partnerships beyond the immediate situation.

… Needs Longterm Process Support …

Where EED could cooperate with partner organisations over a long period
of time, accompanying the ups and downs of complex processes of devel-
opment in violent conflict, a level of trust has developed. On the basis of
this partner organisations use spaces creatively and overcome short term
target oriented thinking in favour of long term strategizing.

… And is Inclusive

An important experience of local organizations in South Asia is the fact
that peace building must be inclusive. There is no alternative. If peace
building efforts do not eventually succeed in winning over even those who
resist peace building efforts everything might be in vein. This may be
extremely difficult in some situations, for example where gross and
systematic human rights violations have been committed. However, the
challenge remains: peace builders early on have to search for ways to make
peace inclusive. South Asian organizations have demonstrated that this is
possible (p 73ff). It requires patience, imagination and strategic thinking.
It does not, however, require a compromise on fundamental principles as
for example justice, human rights and rule of law.

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Introduction

While international humanitarian organisations experienced the war in former Yugoslavia as a challenge to their principles and approaches when aid became a weapon in war, it was the genocide in Rwanda which led to a fundamental change of paradigm in international cooperation. No longer could the impact of conflict on the sustainability of development actions as well as the role that development activities may play in the escalation of conflict be denied. Analysis of outcomes and impact of development activities and a reassessment of project portfolios in the light of conflict realities became an important consideration in project planning and monitoring. The motto coined was "Do No Harm!".

The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 and the consequent wars "against terrorism" of the US-led western world contained a fresh challenge: in what way could partners in development contribute more actively to the transformation of social and political conflicts? If there is a connection between development and violent conflict, then actors in the field of development needed to provide credible alternatives to the immediate reflexes of office holders around the world who wanted to make us believe that it was another battle that would lead to more security.

South Asia, with its proximity to Afghanistan, its high number of protracted violent conflicts, economic and political dynamics that have already created new and deeper social chasms was a region that responded particularly sensitively to the sound of arms. South Asia could hold off the repercussions of this debate for a while as its intelligentsia is sufficiently strong to build its own perspective and contribute to the discussion. It became clear that the experiences of conflict transformation practitioners who are involved in the work locally and regionally would need to guide the partnership with agencies from the North. The church-based development agencies as well as peace services in Europe were interested in taking up this challenge and entering a discussion of a new quality with their partners in South Asia.

This publication is a result of the reflection of EED with its partners in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal under the three-year programme "Peace in South Asia" (PISA). It takes up eight cases of organisations and networks from among EED's partners that have intervened in different conflicts in the region and who were interested and able to engage in a process of discussion with the objective to identify the lessons learnt from

their conflict transformation activities and name the challenges they were or still are facing. The reflection was based on written materials available in the EED office in Bonn as well as in each of the partners' offices and two field visits to South Asia in May/June and in July 2005. During the visits to the partner organisations, which each lasted about three days, with most organisations presented here, interviews were held with conflict actors, concerned populations and development beneficiaries, focus groups and workshops were conducted, seminars were observed, hypotheses were tested and discussed with the leaders of these organisations.

They were exciting visits as they not only exposed the difficulties faced by populations in crisis areas in different parts of South Asia. They also showed the competence, commitment and achievements of local actors in conflict transformation. Often they act silently and rarely are their experiences reported. The author is extremely grateful to have been given this chance to share some of their insights and valuable learning. He has developed a high respect for those who remain active under difficult circumstances, even threats to their own lives or their families' security.

The case studies resulting from the reflection were first fed back to the respective organisations and to EED for corrections and comments. Then their contents were rearranged in order to provide the reader with sufficient background information on the conflict situations and – after introducing the organisation involved – to describe and analyse the intervention in the light of conceptual thinking on conflict transformation. Therefore the first section of this publication discusses the political history of conflicts beginning with minority politics and marginalisation in the cases of Hindu-Muslim relations in India, Muslim-Christian relations in Pakistan and caste relations in South India. This section continues with a description of some of the protracted low-intensity wars that have escaped international public attention, in the north east Indian state of Manipur and in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh.

The next section of this publication describes the eight organisations – all partners of EED – their objectives and their histories. The third and last section looks at practical approaches to conflict transformation. Experiences from different case studies were brought together in that section of the publication to highlight the partners' perspective on issues and questions that continue to puzzle observers of transformation processes. The result can be considered to be a textbook on reflected practical experience that might inspire creativity in South Asia as well as in other contexts when dealing with social and political conflict.

Here instead of using "peace" as a framework for discussion, the concept of "conflict transformation" is adopted as it is better defined and points to concrete processes whereas "peace" often is used by different actors in order to justify their own strategies (like "war for peace"). By "conflict transformation" I mean all those processes that constructively address social conflict, i.e. perceived incompatibilities of opinion, interests, needs, etc. between actors. This includes strategies to reduce violence in order to make conflict more manageable. I prefer the term "conflict transformation" to alternatives like conflict resolution or conflict management because it points at the fact that conflict is not only about problems and objects, and that addressing conflict changes the relationships between those involved. The term is a positive one that, without denying the suffering often resulting from unresolved conflict, investigates the opportunities inherent in conflict.

This paper builds on the results of action oriented research in the field of conflict transformation as frameworks of understanding. Since the beginning of the 1990s, practitioners have increasingly sought to develop models that help them to relate to the realities that they are dealing with. Some of these models helped me to make sense of the situations I encountered during my field visits. I am aware that in South Asia – as in Germany – there is an older tradition of thinking that looks at socio-political processes from the perspective of leftist, especially Marxist theory. Although this provides valuable insights into the dynamics of society and strongly raises fundamental issues around social justice, it is often insufficient to support the transformatory practice of those who are struggling to find ways to address the issues.

For this work I have been much inspired by the writings of Johan Galtung, Diana Francis, John Paul Lederach, Friedrich Glasl and Asish Nandy. Johan Galtung made me aware that there are different dimensions of violence that interact with one another. Personal or direct violence is the form of violence that we immediately tend to think of when we hear the word. In situations of war, civil war, armed struggle and protracted social conflict it is the violence that attracts our attention and that is reported about. Structural or indirect violence by no means causes less harm or suffering. As in the case of personal violence, the victims of structural violence are readily identifiable. The perpetrators however, contrary to situations of personal violence are not defined as the violence is transmitted through economic, social or political structures, making a whole web responsible for the violence. A third dimension is that of cultural violence; all those

aspects of culture that justify or encourage other forms of violence. These aspects may include the symbols and languages used, values, paradigms of thought, religions and traditions.

Diana Francis describes the relationship between constructively engaging in conflict as a party through non-violent direct action or awareness-raising, taking a long-term approach through healing, addressing stereotypes or rebuilding society on the one hand and negotiation or mediation on the other hand (see diagram on page 69). All are important and relevant processes in conflict transformation and a society needs to be empowered in all of these fields. She sub-divides conflict transformation into the pre-confrontation phase when conflict moves from a latent situation – often oppression – through awareness raising to the building of groups that analyse the situation and develop strategies for change. It follows the confrontation phase when non-violent means of bringing the conflict into the open are applied. The subsequent conflict resolution phase encourages dialogue between the parties, leads to negotiation facilitated by or without a mediator and addresses past injury, prejudice and stereotypes. Finally, there is a post-settlement phase when common institutions are (re)built and institutions for continuous conflict regulation mechanisms are set up. For all of these phases, constructive roles as parties to the conflict can be developed and non-partisan, sometimes even partisan, third parties from outside can support them in their efforts. Often these roles are played in parallel by different actors and switching between them may lead to a loss of credibility.

John Paul Lederach points out that a multitude of activities have to happen on different levels of society in order to transform conflicts (see diagram on page 78). He distinguishes between three levels of actors:
· the top leadership of a few decision-makers (heads of government, generals, etc.),
· the middle range leadership of very visible persons in society (usually on the national level),
· the grassroots leadership of persons with mainly local prominence.

Experience with conflict transformation in many countries has shown that progress must be achieved at all three levels if an international or internal conflict is to be lastingly resolved. On the other hand, it is also true that at every level there are key individuals and organisations who can provide particular impetus because of their special relationships with others at higher or lower levels. He describes the lack of flexibility of actors on the top leadership level, the important role of the middle range leaders

who derive their power from their relationship to the top leaders as well as to the grassroots and the direct experience of the consequences of the conflict that the grassroots leaders have.

Asish Nandy observes the debate on secular politics especially in India and describes the rise of identity politics and fundamentalism in terms of political economy. He also uncovers the myths about secularism in post-colonial South Asia that have become a part of national identity-building, but disguised the debate about the relationship between the political elite and large parts of the population.

Friedrich Glasl describes the dynamics of conflict escalation as a set of interwoven and contradictory perceptions and mechanisms which increasingly disempower the conflicting parties and make them enter a development which runs counter to their own long-term interests (see page 62). Glasl looked at escalation as a process of nine distinct stages that begins with the hardening of positions and end with a move "together into the abyss", when conflicting parties enjoy seeing the other destroyed at the price of self-destruction.

Another set of thoughts had inspired a large section of the people working in the South Asian organisations visited during the field trips: Mary Anderson's thoughts about the development of "local capacities for peace". Weakening dividers, elements that contribute to the continuation of war or conflict, and strengthening connectors, elements that build bridges between the parties and reduce tension, are important objectives in transformation work. As many organisations had been mainly involved in activities for social development, Anderson's approach helped them to become more sensitive to unwanted side effects of their work through the transfer of resources and the transmission of implicit ethical messages, as she calls them. It was Mary Anderson who therefore called her famous book on these thoughts "Do No Harm". The instruments proposed in her publication were developed through a process of research on cases from different conflict areas all over the world and the consequent reflection. EED has been part of this process and the work of EED partners in Manipur, for example, was taken up during this process.

One of the organisations discussed in the present study has gone much further in not only analysing the "how" of its interventions, but contributing to the development of a culture of peace. It builds its activities around strengthening a connector: the work on composite heritage done by the Institute for Social Democracy.

As one of my colleagues once said: models are meant to be understood, but in practical conflict transformation work new, better adapted models have to be developed that help to guide those who take responsibility. Theory here no longer takes the lead in providing the glasses through which reality is perceived, like in critical left theory. Practical work informs theory which in turn becomes a tool to support practical work. It is perceived as cultural and as time-bound. It is not meant to be true, but tries to give the subjects insights into his or her action and allow critical reflection.

This new perspective was welcomed by the practitioners met in the course of this work. When such models were proposed – in focus group discussions or in workshops with grassroots activists – as possible ways of thinking generated from other conflict contexts they inspired interesting responses. Activists usually related to these models easily and, when applying them to their own experience, started discussions among themselves on their own intervention. This occasionally led to creative adaptations of these models. In other cases, as in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, we worked with local sayings and proverbs around conflict and analysed terminology in indigenous languages concerning their wisdom about conflict. This stimulated a debate on social perspectives of conflict as well as the relationship of change agents – those who are active in peace, justice or development organisations – to their own traditions.

It was a great experience to meet so many people in a short while who knew very well why they were choosing the approach to their conflict they are working on. The discussions with them allowed me to tap into on a vast amount of experience that waits to be evaluated in more depth. Time was too short and an in-depth analysis of the specific cases was beyond the scope of this project.

During my travels I often remembered the human rights activist Werner Lottje who, as the head of the Department for Policies and Campaigns of Diakonisches Werk Stuttgart, throughout his life had encouraged conflict transformation approaches all over the world and did not see a contradiction between transformation work and advocacy for human rights. I owe him a lot and also EED has learned a lot from him. In South Asia I remembered a debate that we had many years before his death on the vulnerability of grassroots organisations in the face of state repression. Werner Lottje pointed out that strength does not necessarily lie in building big organisations or unified platforms. In some cases, a multitude of small initiatives and groups have had a better chance of surviving repression. The vulner-

ability of activists and groups engaged in conflict transformation work and possibilities to protect them was often the topic of my discussions during the field trip.

Acknowledgements

Conflict in South Asia

South Asia fascinates the imagination because of its rich history, its large variety of cultural expressions that communities have developed to adapt to their environment as well as to address their identity and other needs, the dynamics of its economy and the sheer size of its population. Conflict and, for that matter, violent conflict has been part of this reality for a long time. Efforts to bring about peace and more justice, "experiments with truth" (M.K. Gandhi), are part of this picture as are experiences of oppression, invasions, wars and exclusion. Not one of these realities is sufficient to describe the Subcontinent at a given time and external observers have been struggling to understand the conflicts that endanger the fabric of societies as well as create opportunities for their development.

Some of the conflict scenarios and conflict lines have been chosen for deeper analysis in this section. The criteria for their choice were the involvement of EED partner organisations and their ability to set capacities aside to accompany these case studies. However, it can safely be said that they represent conflicts that are relevant for present day South Asia, that concern political decision-makers, intellectuals as well as large parts of the populations.

Communal tensions and violence continue to fuel the argument for a division of the Subcontinent into those who are identified with Hindu belief systems and those who are considered Muslims. Politics of the exclusion of minorities, the oppression of lower castes, the division of societies along religious and / or ethnic lines are recurring events. Gujarat and Tamil Nadu – a state in the north west and a state in the south eastof India – as well as Lahore in Pakistan were the more specific examples chosen for the case studies, a choice that has not been made according to systematic criteria, but that is none the less significant for the Subcontinent.

Social conflict is not experienced in the same way by men and by women. Patriarchal structures generate violence and make women especially vulnerable. In Gujarat as well as in Lahore feminist projects and women's organisations were visited and provided insights with this focus. Their work demonstrates that women are both victims of violence and agents for change.

Protracted civil war along the northern borders of India and in those regions of Bangladesh that are inhabited by ethnic and religious minorities have accompanied the existence of these rather recently created states and

continue to challenge state-building. Particularly India's Northeast has been a region of strategic interest to the state, but one that also escaped complete integration into the country. Accessible only with difficulty, low-intensity civil wars have been going on there for almost fifty years.

Outright civil war like that in Nepal since 1996 has been a phenomenon mainly known from countries like Sri Lanka or Afghanistan. Until its beginning Nepal had been a country blessed by its openness and good security situation. But tensions had been building up for decades and latent conflict was not sufficiently addressed.

In this publication we are focussing on the experiences of a few selected partner organisations only. Not all conflict regions in South Asia are reflected. The case studies are restricted to those South Asian countries where EED is supporting local partner organisations. Experiences from Sri Lanka, Bhutan or the Maldives are therefore not discussed. This, however, should not be understood as a lack of concern or interest by the author or EED.

Conflict in Divided Societies

Communalism

Lalitpur has a local pilgrimage site popularly called "tuvan". The Hindi word originally comes from the English "two in one" and means a place that is visited by Hindus as a temple and by Muslims as a mosque. Lalitpur, situated in the region of Bundelkhand in India's northern state of Uttar Pradesh is one of many examples of shrines and religious sites that are frequented by members of both religions. Customs have developed around the spiritual needs of a population of a mixed religious background that has lived together for centuries. Conflicts have existed as they do in any society, and they have occurred within as well as across the religious communities. The general picture in vast parts of northern India is that of a population concerned with security and survival, developing customs and traditions that are shared by everybody and that can contribute to cohesion.

Recently, many such realities have been destroyed. Political ideologies drawing their symbols and justification from various religious sources demanded that the dividing lines between communities be more clearly drawn. The concept of purity of religions came into play. Pilgrimage sites, feasts and shrines that belong to both religious communities have been attacked, especially after the rise of Muslim and Hindu politics in India. In some Indian states such as Uttar Pradesh or Gujarat, although many reli-

gious sites of the minority communities have been destroyed in communal violence, sites of shared importance have been targeted to a much greater extent. The composite heritage that is the cement of Indian society and culture, but also the depository of creativity and knowledge, has come under threat.

Hindu extremism is more of a socio-political phenomenon than a religious one. The urban lower middle class is the section of society that feels most attracted to these ideologies that promise to challenge the power of those whom they see speaking of secularism in order to defend their own social and economic influence. The rise of Hindu political ideologies is in parallel with the development of a large middle class that is not profiting from the modernisation of India to the degree that they would expect to gain. Hindu extremism is no "return to" medieval times or a pre-colonial period, though it often uses symbols that suggest this. It is a part of adaptation to modernity. Often even traditional religious authorities look at fanatic Hindu politicians with suspicion because they are the first to lose influence over communities to those who profess the more radical and "pure" teaching in a more eloquent way. Although Hindu political extremists seem to challenge the existing concepts of state and nation as well as current paradigms of economic relationships, they use these concepts and paradigms and interpret traditional thinking in the light of national state and capitalist economy.

This stream of thinking has existed in Indian political debate since colonial times. As early as at the beginning of the 20th century, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar wrote his book "Hindutva" which became the ideological textbook of Hindu politics. Keshav Baliram Hedgewar founded the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (RSS) and was later succeeded by M.S. Golwalkar. They quickly gathered support and even some of the leaders of the Indian National Congress were influenced by this thinking. The assertion of the minority Muslim community after the partition of the province of Bengal in 1905, especially through the creation of the Muslim League and the rise of Islamist parties later on further fuelled political assertiveness among Hindus and led to the segmentation of Indian society. Both religious political ideologies continued to provide ready arguments for each other.

Later, the RSS developed new branches and local front organisations. On a national level, the Hindu Mahasabha, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Bajrang Dal were formed and also the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was and is closely linked to this group of organisations. All together are known collectively as the Sangh Parivar, the "family" of Hindu extremist organisations.

Many politicians from the Sangh Parivar organisations or parties began their careers in one of them and continued in another, maintaining the links and networks that they have developed. The RSS and Bajrang Dal remain among the most militant and radical. Early on, they adopted a long-term strategy to attract young people and slowly, over the generations, built a social support basis. Youth was trained in martial arts and leadership. This radical, fanatic youth is used to attack minorities and guarantee RSS dominance wherever needed. Preparations for taking over power were done on all levels, the cultural, educational, economic, political and social. Media, including modern media, were used to strengthen this influence. The Sangh Parivar was quick in using opportunities offered by the privatisation of the electronic media market and today control at least two large TV channels in India.

This persistence practised by the Sangh Parivar organisations began to show successes in the early 1980s, when Hindu political ideologies began to enter mainstream political discussion and, for the first time, seemed able to gather sufficient support in order to aim for political control in some of India's states and at its centre. This threat to Indian society was not taken seriously, however. By the end of the 20th century they had arrived: the BJP and its allies won elections in some of the northern states as well as in the federal elections. Hindutva became a major political as well as cultural force, beginning to reorganise Indian society and rewrite Indian history.

Before that, an unprecedented campaign to "regain" religious places from under Muslim control had polarised Indian society and gathered support for fundamentalist forces. The weakness of the secular state became evident when the Babri Masjid – Ram Janmabhoomi issue was launched to arouse emotions for the Hindu cause. An old mosque in the northern Indian town of Ayodhya (in the state of Uttar Pradesh), allegedly built by the Emporer Baber and at that time no longer in use for prayer services, was said to have been constructed on the site of an old temple destroyed by Muslims for this purpose. This temple was supposed to mark the birthplace of the Hindu divine incarnation, Rama. The story of Rama, the ancient epic Ramayana, had just been shown as a TV serial all over India, moving the people with its heroic stories emphasising warrior ideals as well as traditional values of hierarchy, virtues of duty and obedience. In 1992, the Sangh Parivar mobilised its followers to destroy this mosque and begin building a new temple on its place. Both a court decision against the

destruction of the Babri mosque and a secular government's stand to post-
pone its decision on the future of the site were ignored. Secular state insti-
tutions stood powerless against the triumph of fanatic masses, incited by
right-wing Hindu politicians.

The destruction of the Babri mosque was taken as an example all over
India where places of worship of all religions had changed hands through-
out history, often several times. History was mythicised and Hindus were
portrayed as victims of Muslim or foreign Christian domination: now they
would have to reassert their right on India as their only legitimate and
sacred homeland. A distorted understanding of history served as a weapon
and the self-declared victims became the perpetrators of violence and
injustice in a struggle that is actually about resources and access to markets
in a globalising economy. Elements of religion, historic experience and
cultural practice became what the peace researcher Johan Galtung calls
"cultural violence" – the aspects that justify direct or structural forms of
violence.

Communalism in Gujarat

"What can one expect from an administration that has openly sided with
murderers?" asked India's well-known columnist and journalist Khush-
want Singh after the communal violence in Gujarat in the year 2002. His
analysis is that Gujarat, the state in the west of India bordering Pakistan,
has become "the laboratory of Hindutva", of Hindu extremism in India.
Although Gujarat is the birthplace of Mahatma Gandhi and still has a
large number of associations, groups and projects deriving their inspira-
tion from Gandhi's thinking on nonviolence, at the time of the violence
from February to August 2002 only a small number of intellectuals raised
their voices against the injustice, as Sheba George, director of the women's
project SAHR WARU says. Those few who openly took a position against
the violence were threatened themselves. This reflects the extent to which
minorities felt abandoned to communal forces.

Communal tension in Gujarat did not start in February 2002. As early as
1969, Ahmedabad and other Gujarati towns were hit by widespread vio-
lence between Hindus and Muslims. In the aftermath, this was very often
attributed in public to the difficult historical relations between the two
religious communities. This interpretation conceals the facts that it is
mainly the Muslim minority that is targeted by Hindu perpetrators and

that riots serve political ends. The rise of Hindu extremism in India in the 1980s culminating in the destruction of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya in 1992 had its effects on communal relations in Gujarat as well. Over all this period, the major towns in the state experienced riots. Symbols of Islamic culture and Muslim history in Gujarat were erased and the peaceful coexistence of both communities denied. A famous case was the change of Ahmedabad's name into "Amdavad" by the local government in order to efface any reminiscence of an Islamic past to this large Gujarati city, in fact the economic centre of the state. For these reasons, the often used terms "communal violence" or "violence between Hindu and Muslim communities" should be more correctly replaced by a vocabulary referring to genocide. Human rights activists in Gujarat and other parts of India prefer to refer to the incidents in 2002 by using the word "carnage" in order to emphasise the one-sidedness of the violent attacks.

Muslims and other minorities began to feel more and more uneasy and insecure. Since 1998/1999, Gujarat has entered a new phase in these developments. Christian clergy who had worked in the remote and neglected areas of southern Gujarat among Adivasi (indigenous) populations were declared unwanted in the state and there were incidences of violence against Christians and Christian institutions. State authorities led by political parties of the Hindu right collaborated openly and took sides with the rioters. These were signs of more difficult times to come: the effort to enlarge the support basis of the Hindu political parties meant involving lower castes and declaring indigenous people – often with their consent – part of the Hindu community. Religious minorities were identified as the common enemies. In 2002, state security forces were reduced to the role of inactive onlookers or in some cases even leaders of the mob. The police had received orders not to help any Muslim during the first three days of the violence.

The situation degraded quickly after a coach of the Ahmedabad-bound Sabarmati Express burnt down and 59 passengers were killed by the fire, among them women and children, in the town of Godhra on 27 February 2002. The train was overcrowded, the majority of the passengers being Kar Sevaks, Hindu activists who were returning from the disputed religious site in Ayodhya. The causes of the fire remain unclear to this day. While one hypothesis states that Kar Sevaks and Muslim vendors at Godhra station had a quarrel motivating the Muslims to throw stones at the train and attack it, the version supported by the ruling BJP was that Muslims had gathered in Godhra to attack the train. There are reports that the Kar Sevaks misbehaved against Muslims all the way to and from Ayodhya. The

railway ministry inquiry – and other independent fact-finding missions – came to the conclusion that the fire could not have started from outside the train and was not fuelled by inflammable liquids, which rules out an external attack.

However, the government-leaning press and the Gujarat government were fast to call this an attack by Muslim "terrorists" and a provocation for the majority Hindu population. The Gujarati newspaper Sandesh the next morning carried an article in this line and added that Muslims had abducted, raped, mutilated and killed Hindu women from the train. Other Gujarati newspaper reports said that mosques were used to organise the attack. When these reports were corrected a few weeks later, they had already become the pamphlets quoted and used during several of the violent incidences in Ahmedabad. The day after the Godhra train fire, the bodies of the dead were transported to Ahmedabad in a car procession.

From then on, Muslims and Muslim residential areas were attacked all over Gujarat and more than 1000 people, perhaps more than 2000, were killed, Islamic religious sites and religious sites owned by both communities destroyed, shops and houses set on fire. The exact numbers of the killed have not yet been established more than four years later, many families have not been issued death certificates for their fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters or children killed in the genocide.

The attackers were well prepared, with lists of houses inhabited by Muslims, most of them uniformed as members of the Hindu fundamentalist groups, equipped with swords and trishuls (tridents). In many cases, Hindu middle class united with Dalits and indigenous people from quarters close to Muslim areas. Hindu families were spared. The police was absent, understaffed and declared that they had orders not to help the attacked. The attackers did not distinguish between their victims by class: poorer residential areas, business communities or Muslim landowners in some rural areas were the focus of the assaults. In one of the first incidents, the house and the richer middle-class neighbourhood of former member of parliament Ehsan Jafri was attacked. The parliamentarian who had called state and government authorities for hours – among them the ruling chief minister Narendra Modi and the interior minister of Gujarat – was brutally killed, hacked and his body burnt later in the day. Women were raped, killed and burnt while other people were beaten up and stabbed. Houses were set on fire with the inhabitants still inside. Police arrived when the killing had nearly ended. This sent a clear signal that no Muslim and no member of religious minorities would be safe in the state.

In another suburb, Naroda Patia, Muslim inhabitants were chased out of their houses; a mosque was burnt and desecrated. The fearful crowd of mainly women, the elderly and children was chased through the narrow roads of the area before many of them were stripped, raped, gang raped, killed, burnt to ashes and thrown into a well in order to destroy all evidence. Many women were tortured before their death with clearly sexualised forms of violence. Children were given oil instead of water to drink. Dead bodies were displayed and thrown around. Police shot and tear gassed the fleeing Muslim crowd, Muslims were taken into custody, but the perpetrators of the acts were left. The well is still closed and many of the deaths have not been officially acknowledged.

In both cases, and others that occurred during the coming four days, several thousand, sometimes between 10,000 and 20,000 people, had come together to attack the Muslim communities. Among these crowds were people from neighbouring residential areas, people from outside, politicians, men and women. The government and parts of the media later termed these events "natural revenge" for the Godhra train fire. The chief minister congratulated the Hindu population for its "restraint". Whereas the survivors of the Godhra train fire were offered compensation, the damage done to the victims of the Gujarat genocide was not recognised. Recognition is likely to remain unforthcoming, as presently, in the name of reconciliation, a large coalition of actors is trying to encourage withdrawal of the cases filed and denying the right of the victims to get justice.

Violence continued in Ahmedabad for six months, with two larger waves of persecution at the end of March and in April/May of the same year. Large numbers of displaced persons had to be accommodated as many survivors were too afraid and/or traumatised to return to their own homes. In Ahmedabad alone there were more than 66.000 displaced persons. Some still do not dare to return, some have migrated to other states in India. Some of the inhabitants have been given places in resettlement areas outside town, with little infrastructure and far away from their work places. This gives an economic dimension to the genocide, driving the Muslim population out of town and disadvantaging them further in respect to employment possibilities: the communities supporting the Hindu right are among the winners of this situation.

As compared to previous cases of violence in Gujarat, the incidents of 2002 have added an active role of the state and the ruling party to the violent events. There was obviously not only no show of support or solidarity for the survivors of the genocide by the chief minister or the state govern-

ment; the instrumentalisation of the Godhra train fire happened with government support. One killing was justified with another by political leaders up to the top decision-makers. Rioters had received lists containing the names of the Muslim families in some of the areas attacked. Police had received orders not to intervene on behalf of the attacked in the first days; they also assisted and sometimes guided the mob. State authorities remained silent in spite of being informed immediately. The attackers believed that they were backed by the Gujarat state government and they had good reasons to believe this. The Gujarat state government was supported by the central government in Delhi, at that time also in the hands of right-wing Hindu parties. Media in Gujarat took sides with the government and intellectuals largely remained silent.

Another feature of the Gujarat violence of 2002 was the use of women as a battlefield among the communities. While verbal and physical attacks on women had already been a feature of past communal attacks, what was shocking about 2002 was the high number and the depraved manner in which planned sexual assaults were carried out by Hindu men with the support and encouragement of Hindu women in some areas. The sexual assaults on minority women in the 1969 violence remained undocumented while the sexualised violence on minority women in the violence of 1992 - 1993 was documented.

The Sandesh newspaper report on the Godhra train fire describing the fictitious rape, mutilation and killing of young women in graphic terms suggested this new dimension and was used as a justification for rape, mutilation and killing of minority women all over Gujarat in the following days. Not only was this seen as sexualised violence against women, but more importantly as a humiliation for men. Whereas violence against men may or may not trigger feelings of revenge, men would feel nearly compelled to defend and revenge their women-folk. This follows a general pattern of objectification in India, where women are considered to belong to men who are considered their protectors and therefore the use of violence against them would be the strongest demonstration of power over their men.

Similarly, the genocide in Ahmedabad and in many other places in Gujarat used women in order to insult and disgrace Muslim men and show them that they do not have any power to protect them. It cannot be spontaneous acts or coincidences that in so many cases women who were raped and killed as well as survivors had been stripped, paraded and often objects were inserted into their bodies. In fact, this increases the feelings of shame and insecurity within the whole community. Obviously the aim of

such a strategy is "ethnic cleansing" of the state, making the minority know that they are not even able to protect the intimacy of their lives and that nobody will come for help. Many slogans telling Muslims that they should go to Pakistan or adopt Hindu Gods as their heroes support this assumption. The consequence of both dimensions, the state participation in the violence and its sexualised character, is that the Muslim community is increasingly finding it difficult to identify with Gujarat as its home state. A sense of alienation is prevalent.

Many survivors are weary and traumatised of continuously being asked to prove their loyalty to the state and the country. They believe India to be their motherland and they have nowhere else to go. It is the anguish, deep hurt and trauma about being given secondary status and being discriminated and violated by the State itself in such an open and gruesome manner that has forced the community in to ghettoisation. The community itself does not want to alienate itself. This point is proved by persistent efforts made by survivor community to engage with the state for legal redress and basic rights, their participation in civil and political spheres whenever given the opportunities, their openness, willingness and proactive steps and participation for reconciliation and peace with the majority civil society, as they have stakes in peace and do not hold all Hindus responsible for communal violence.

What has been little discussed are the effects of this violence on the women who suffer from physical and psychological trauma. They have lost their economic basis and even see the perpetrators of this violence moving around freely.

The violence unleashed against the Muslim minority has led to a stronger ghettoisation of the community. Out of fear and out of constraint, people move out of mixed neighbourhoods into closed communities. This was already a prevalent tendency among Gujarati Muslims. For a feeling of security, Hindus are also migrating to Hindu localities. However, while for Hindus in most cases this move is of their own choice, for Muslim communities it is forced ghettoisation and displacement. With reference to ghettoisation, the disparity in basic civil amenities provided to Hindu and Muslim areas by state and civic bodies, and different degrees of access to a wide range of socio-economic, educational, career and livelihood options including schools, health care centres, banks, public and children's parks and recreational facilities has to be especially mentioned.

This void is replaced by other actors further decreasing the choice that the community has had. The increase in influence that Islamist social institutions have in these closed communities is already felt, a factor increasing seclusion more and more. These developments again reduce the scope that Muslim women could have in a secular society and compel them to conform with restrictions in their economic, educational and cultural liberties.

Instead of drawing political consequences, political leaders of the ruling party continue to insult the Muslim and Christian minorities in Gujarat and justify the system of violence imposed on them. As truth was never officially established and politically acknowledged in Gujarat, as justice is not given to the survivors of the violence of 2002, and as the perpetrators of the violence remain in power and control, the genocide cannot be considered to be over. Any incident involving the killing of a member of a minority community will continue to remind its other members of the incidents, will demonstrate their insecurity and fulfil the same objectives. Several of the criteria defined by Article 2 of the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, are applicable to the Gujarat case:

"... any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

(a) Killing members of the group;

(b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;

(c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;

(d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;

(e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group."

Patriarchy and Communalism in Gujarat

The war against women can be considered to be the most destructive war worldwide. It is systematic and it is fought with different forms of structural as well as personal violence. It shows its ugliest face during wars, but it has much deeper roots and it continues during so-called peace times. Indian societies are no exception to this situation: women are systematically targeted as battlefields to insult men, the number of women among the poor is higher than that of men, women have fewer chances to satisfy their own needs and realise their rights. Female foeti are aborted as boy children are demanded. Girls are denied the same amount of education and healthy

food as is given to young boys. Young brides are humiliated, burnt alive or psychologically tortured in order to demand higher dowries from their families. The work loads in households and rural economies are often higher for women than for men. Domestic violence from their husbands' families is a daily phenomenon. Widows are denied access to parts of social life. Leadership and participation in decision-making in society is very much more difficult for women to attain than for men. Their status derives from their fathers, brothers, husbands, but not from their own achievements. And this is justified with cultural, religious and scientific ideas.

The often religiously sustained concept of "honour and shame" makes women more vulnerable to all forms of violence. They are considered the bearers of the honour – of their own, their husbands, their families, their ethnic groups, their nation. If they lose this honour, due to their own behaviour or to external influence – even when being attacked – they become a shame to the whole community. Attacking and raping Muslim women is also considered an attack on the whole community.

Using women to take away the dignity of the whole community has already been described during the violence around the partition of the Subcontinent in 1947. However, it is still difficult to publicly discuss sexualised violence in terms of gender power relations. This taboo makes it even more difficult to record sexualised violence against men. This aspect of violence is a result of the same power structure. The perpetrators who rape men intend to reduce them to the social status of women; a fact that is neither reported nor documented in most cases of communal violence.

Patriarchy generates violence. As it touches power relationships that everybody in society, whether man or woman, is part of, patriarchy creates patterns of dominance that serve as paradigms for other social relationships. These paradigms dehumanise and make controlling power the prevalent element of social relationships. Violence deriving from patriarchy is therefore at the roots of gender injustice, caste injustice or of ideologies that use religion as a legitimising instrument or as a criterion for exclusion. Here, we encounter all three forms of violence that Johan Galtung has described in his theoretical thinking: the direct or personal violence during physical attacks or domestic violence; the indirect or structural violence of exclusion; the cultural violence of using elements of religion in order to justify continuing oppression.

Patriarchy means that women belonging to oppressed minorities are doubly discriminated? They face gender injustice within their own community as well as the oppression of their community by others. In Gujarat, the vulnerability of women was already felt in the aftermath of the earthquake of 26 January 2001, which devastated large parts of the state. Typically, women were worse off than men though both were hit by the same events.

Women are influenced by disasters and social unrest in the following ways:

- Increased vulnerability to physical, domestic, emotional and sexual violence within and outside homes.
- Almost negligible access to health services, especially for pregnant women and lactating mothers.
- Girls are married off at very early ages due to the crisis in some cases, in othersmany marriages break down as families are not able to pay the dowry after the economic decline.
- Double responsibility on women (household and children on the one hand and breadwinning on the other)
- Increased limitation of women regarding their sphere of action privately and publicly.
- Drop out, loss of friends, early marriage and restriction in mobility.
- Increased consumption of alcohol, drugs and gambling amongst youth.
- Unemployment and underemployment.
- Social isolation and alienation.
- No celebration, no festivals, no happiness.
- Increase of conflict within the family, neighbourhood, religion.
- Discrimination, violence and abuse by state and police machinery, etc.

In general it can be said that women suffer differently from men in situations of crisis and disaster. This decreases the chances for women to heal after the crisis experience. Trauma, stress, hopelessness and uncertainty create deep wounds. The continuing threat to economic survival is a major impediment in the healing process. Seeing oneself as victim prevents one from becoming an actor and breaking passivity. Enemy images, hate and the desire for revenge create an atmosphere that does not permit peace and reconciliation.

The Gujarat genocide of 2002 affected Vadodara, one of the larger towns in the south of the state and a cultural centre, differently from Ahmedabad. Comparatively, there was much less loss of life. But the level of property destruction through the burning of houses, destruction of shops, etc. and of police harassment was very high. Muslim families fled their residential areas and, three years later, often had not returned. Relationships to neighbouring communities, especially to Dalits and Adivasis were broken.

In 2001, during the earthquake, everybody was affected independently of respective collective identities. There was a common concern and a feeling of mutual solidarity. In 2002, the situation changed when the minority community was attacked by the majority – and only very few members of the Hindu community came out publicly to denounce the violence and demonstrate solidarity with the attacked Muslims. Again, as in the 2001 earthquake, women were the most vulnerable section of the community. In situations of crisis their responsibilities increased, while at the same time their options diminished.

Hameeda (name changed) is a 28-year-old married woman from Maretha:

"The carnage has changed my life completely" says Hameeda. "It forced me to take up a job in order to run the family. My husband, who owned a rickshaw, could not earn much after the riots. I never thought the aftermath of Godhra could take on this turn. I did not take the rumours of attack seriously. But when they struck on March 2, 2002 it hit me hard. My mother-in-law was at our grocery shop when the rioters forced her to run. She managed to grab what little money she could and ran towards the mosque. By then, the riots had begun and she could not reach home as stone pelting had started. My father-in-law forced me to run away into the field with my 4-year-old son and our neighbour's daughters. From morning till late afternoon we just hid in the fields. We had run with just the clothes on our backs and no slippers. Late into the night, other members of the family joined us and we walked almost 45 kilometres hiding from attackers. We had four pregnant women with us. Later, we went to our relatives' home in Gajgoriad village in Padra Taluka and stayed there for a few days. We had to move on for eight months and we sought refuge at various places. Our house was rebuilt but everything that we once owned is lost. We returned back to the village after eight months. Many of us don't have fans, beds or any other furniture. They looted everything – not a single needle could be found. My mother-in-law suffers from stress and depression. She used to own a grocery shop, but today she has to go to the Jamat Khana to wash utensils or work as a daily wage labourer. This has caused her tremendous emotional shock. It has also led to frequent fights between us."

Dalit Politics in South India

"When I began meeting with Dalits, people of my own caste opposed me," explained Jayasingam. The project officer of the Church of South India's Peace Programme works in Ramnar district on the southern tip of India, an area known since the 1930s for its caste conflicts. Together with a group of peace volunteers, he organises local peace fora, encourages inter-dining events with members of different castes, intervenes in conflicts about burial grounds for different caste communities. He himself belongs to a dominant caste of the region and through his own identity hopes to be able to bridge gaps more easily. Over the past few decades, these gaps between caste groups have erupted into violence more and more frequently. Several factors have contributed to this rise in violent clashes between populations that are often both economically disadvantaged.

Tamil Nadu is one of the southern states of India. It is one of the larger states in terms of population as well as of area. Tamil people can trace their culture back several thousand years and ruins of ancient monuments as well as old texts prove a long history of the Dravidian group of languages and cultures that is mainly found in South India and considered distinct from the northern "Indo-Aryan" cultures and languages. These traditionally considered the south being a region in need of civilisation and imposed Brahmin high-caste thinking and culture on a population that was considered inferior. Only in colonial times did the Tamil people begin to develop an awareness of their own values and history and to revolt against Brahmin domination. Many Tamil nationalist movements – and the suspicion towards northern politics that prevails to this day – originate in that period and are associated with the rise of lower castes against the Brahmins.

The traditional Hindu social system is called varnâshramadharma. It demands that the individual conduct his or her life according to his or her identity in two categories, one referring to the family status and the other referring to the social status. The four ashrama in the life of a person are brahmacharya (unmarried disciplehood), grihasthâ (married householder), vânaprasthâ (hermitage after the children have grown up), sanyâsa (ascetic without bindings in society). The four varna according to Hindu thinking are brâhmana (the priestly caste), kshatriya (the warrior caste), vaishya (the commercial caste) and shudra (the serving caste). Through history these four caste groups, which in turn each contained several different castes, have been differentiated again, especially by means of marriages. Inter-caste marriage was not encouraged and not considered desirable by the caste system. But it was observed as reality through all

times and actually became an important instrument for the integration of new populations into the caste system. There are two types of marriages, anuloma, permitted marriages that therefore move the person higher into the hierarchy of the caste structure, and pratiloma, marriage against the hierarchy. These pratiloma marriages led and still lead to the emergence of new lower castes as well as of caste groups outside the varnâshramadharma system.

In Tamil Nadu, the three lower caste groups were the social foundation for the development of Tamil self-consciousness. The large Tamil political parties are creations of this time. They build their strength especially on the large number of shudras in the state and have been successful in coming to power in most elections of the past decades. Recently, they have sided with the Hindu extremist forces of the right and have even been part of coalitions forming the government with them at India's centre. Right-wing Hindu politicians since the beginning of the 20th century have shown a special interest in the southern tip of India, especially the culturally and symbolically important pilgrimage sites in Kanyakumari district. They claim power for the whole "holy" Indian land between the Himalayas in the north and the tip of India at Kanyakumari.

The rise of lower castes to power in Tamil Nadu was seen as an act of liberation by their leaders. However, the caste hierarchy does not end here. There are large populations who are not even part of the caste system, the groups called "untouchables" by the varna caste people, or as they call themselves today, Dalits.

The Dalit movement also dates back to the struggle for independence. Although Mahatma Gandhi opposed the discrimination and marginalisation of people based on caste, his thinking was not radical enough in the perception of many Dalits. It was the Dalit leader Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar who inspired Dalits to become more aware of their rights. He, himself, at the end of his life converted to Buddhism in order to leave the Hindu caste system and many followed his example. In Tamil Nadu, Christianity offered a similar hope to many Dalits and therefore the protestant churches in South India draw their membership mainly from Dalit communities. As a result, within the churches a theology of liberation was allowed to develop that mainly takes up caste issues. As a reaction, high castes tried to prevent conversions, which they said were based on persuasion with financial incentives and in the interest of foreign agents. They even promulgated a law preventing conversions in the state, which was recently repealed again.

However, hopes to become part of a more egalitarian system by converting to Buddhism, Islam or Christianity were dashed in most cases. The social stigma remains and no religion has really abolished caste biases in practice. According to many Dalits, the Christian churches do not go far enough to educate high caste Christians on the issue of untouchability. They see their approach to marginalised communities as mainly based on a humanitarian perspective and as having nothing to do with justice. On the other hand, for the state authorities any convert to Christianity loses his or her rights to positive discrimination, a system that entitles disadvantaged castes in India to quotas in education and government jobs. The authorities claim that officially Christianity does not recognise castes.

Over these past few years economic pressures on rural communities have increased. Under the Congress governments and much more under the governments led by the Hindu right, India has been opening up to market forces. Tamil Nadu's urban centres have striven to develop a modern industry that is competitive in globalised economies, but the rural areas have been neglected and are becoming more and more marginalised. Therefore, a struggle by Dalit communities for respect and dignity is always also a struggle for economic participation. And Dalit groups fighting among each other prevent the solidarity needed to overcome the unjust system.

Minority Politics in Pakistan

"If NGOs do not work for communal harmony, the government will not move on this matter, either," said Akram Gil, member of Pakistan's Parliament and in charge of minority issues. He emphasises the importance of NGO activities for human rights and minority rights while political pressure threatens to move the country more and more away from the standards of an open plural democracy. He does not share the commonly heard criticism that NGOs are agents of foreign interests because they receive funding from abroad. Religious minorities in particular have been neglected by the state and government and therefore only can develop their own situation with the help of NGOs.

Pakistan is in a difficult phase of its socio-political history. Pakistan was founded in 1947 as a state for South Asia's Muslims based on the vision of an educated secular oriented Muslim elite originating from the large towns of India. They were supported by feudal landowners in today's provinces of Panjab and Sindh who feared the socialist land reform policies of the Indian independence movement. For half of the period since independence Pakistan has been ruled by military dictatorships. The rest of the time

changing alliances of a few large political parties were in power representing the interests of large industries, large-scale landowners and the military. The foremost factors in keeping up this system are the military's involvement in all spheres of political, economic and cultural life, the continuation of feudal landowning structures and the weakness of civil society outside existing networks shared by military, industrialists, landowners and administration.

Pakistan's claim to unite South Asia's Muslims under one roof was challenged in the late 1960s by Bengali self-assertion revolting against the dominance by West Pakistani politicians, mainly former migrants from the Urdu speaking areas in North India and inhabitants of the province of Punjab. In 1971, the former East Pakistan attained independence as Bangladesh, following a secession war supported by India. The remaining western part of Pakistan was no longer able to portray itself as the home to all Muslims of the Subcontinent; a nationalist myth was lost and cohesion increasingly needed to be created by force. Today, ethnic identities are experiencing a renaissance, again also because of a perceived domination by Punjab, the most populous and economically strongest province.

A lack of economic development and participation, together with the changing political situation in South Asia since the US invasion in Afghanistan have created forces within the country that not only challenge the old power structures but also the cohesion of the country. Whereas Islamic parties had still been integrated in the political system when they were needed as allies against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, they are now seen as threats to Pakistan's stability. Pakistan's political leadership tries to maintain a delicate balance between Islamic tendencies and satisfying western allies. Security and intelligence play increasingly important roles in maintaining the system. Among the population, clan and regional identities – sometimes combined with religious ideologies – are becoming more integrative than Pakistani nationalism.

Discrimination against women, ethnic and religious minorities as well as the erosion of civil liberties have to be seen in the light of the struggles between traditional power holders and newly emerging political forces and as a consequence of the disintegration of a state which, in principle, could guarantee and enforce rights. In 2005, two provinces are ruled by conservative Islamic parties, ethnic-based violence is increasing in the big towns, military interventions destabilise regions along Pakistan's western borders, Quran schools (madrasas) still attract larger sections of the youth than the neglected secular educational system; poverty is increasing.

The military-industrial-feudal power constellation is increasingly facing criticism from an urban educated middle class. This class demands political reforms in order to create space for economic development. In spite of censorship, this criticism is made in the media, especially in the English language print media. Human rights groups, NGOs in the social, ecological and humanitarian fields are contributing to create a public debate that gives hope for a democratisation of society. Their cooperation with international networks and their dependence on donors makes them vulnerable to efforts to delegitimise them as representatives of foreign interests.

Women struggling for women's rights and religious minorities insisting on their constitutionally guaranteed rights to freedom of religion are often perceived in this light. Hindus are discredited as agents of India, while Christians are described as supporters of US-American policies.

Under its constitution, Pakistan guarantees the rights of minorities, prohibits religious intolerance and social discrimination. However, throughout its history, governments have not taken concrete steps to rise up to these standards. Contrary to that, laws have been decided and policies implemented which institutionalise discrimination. In other cases, the effects of insensitive laws amount to discrimination or general impunity for offences against minorities create the impression that the state approves of religious intolerance. There is low awareness among the majority community that this also infringes on their own democratic rights and on plural society.

The situation for religious minorities has become more difficult since consecutive governments have been trying to appease Islamist movements by including some of their demands into changes in legislation. The most striking examples are the blasphemy laws and the Hudood Ordinances. It was the Zia government which after 1979 introduced laws referring to religion into the penal code. The "Hudood Ordinances" were introduced as early as 1979. These are five separate laws dealing with punishments in the case of robbery, adultery and rape; the accusation of adultery; the use and sale of alcohol and drugs; the procedure of whipping. The word "hudood" is the plural of "hadd" meaning the "limit" set for acceptable behaviour. Punishments are severe. A hadd sentence requires specific evidence based on a confession from the accused or a defined number of witnesses. According to a later law, women and non-Muslims are excluded as witnesses for hadd sentences. Subsequent government review commissions found the Hudood Ordinance to be counter to Islamic law and to basic human rights. Though they recommended their repeal, the government has taken no such action.

Even more striking are the blasphemy laws which were introduced between 1980 and 1986. They place any derogatory remark or action against the Prophet, his family, his companions or against the Quran under severe punishment. In 1982, for example, life imprisonment was prescribed for anyone who "wilfully defiles, damages, or desecrates a copy of the Holy Quran or of any extract therefrom or uses it in any derogatory manner or for any unlawful purpose." In 1986, another law was introduced prescribing death or life imprisonment for defiling the name of the Prophet. Amendments to the blasphemy laws in 2004 have not resolved the possibility of misuse and the discriminatory character of the laws.

These laws are often used to settle personal or community disputes by accusing the opponent of blasphemy. Religious extremists use the laws to mobilise against minorities. Between 1987 and 2004 more than 4,000 people were accused of blasphemy, about 560 people were formally charged. About one hundred people were detained on blasphemy accusations in jail in 2004, most of those charged by subordinate courts were subsequently repealed by higher courts. Judges prolong litigation, not wanting to take position and decide out of fear for their own security.

Blasphemy laws threaten to tear the social fabric. Mistrust within communities with mixed religious identities has been increasing. The results are forced migration, murder of people who have been accused, riots and destruction. Though religious minorities are more vulnerable to these laws as it is easier to level charges against them than against members of the majority community, the number of Muslims victimised by these laws is higher than that of non-Muslims. This is due to the fact that blasphemy laws have been used in personal disputes, but also in conflicts between Sunnis and Shiites and with Ahmadiyyas. Moreover, these laws infringe basic human rights concerning the freedom of thought and expression as one may easily become a victim of their use or abuse.

Low Intensity War

The Chittagong Hill Tracts

"We lived better when there was war" – this was the startling remark of villagers in Bandarban, the most southerly of the three districts in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) of Bangladesh. They explain that at that time, "the Bengalis" were afraid of coming to this mountainous region inhabited by eleven ethnically distinct indigenous peoples. Now the indigenous

population is afraid, because the influx of Bengali settlers encouraged by the army administration is increasing rapidly. Relations between the two communities are tense. Military presence is visibly high and the freedom of movement in the Hill Tracts is restricted.

Originally, hopes were high after 2 December 1997, when a peace accord was signed between the government of Bangladesh and the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti (PCJSS, meaning Chittagong Hill Tracts People's Solidarity Association, founded in 1972). Today, frustration about the lack of implementation of the accord by successive Bangladeshi governments and the feeling of powerlessness are all pervading among the indigenous people. Taking up arms again to many seems to be the only option left to regain respect.

The Chittagong Hill Tracts consist of the three districts of Khagrachhari, Rangamati and Bandarban in the south-east of Bangladesh, bordering India and Myanmar in the north and east as well as the districts of Chittagong and Cox's Bazar in the west. After being ceded in the 18th century to the British East India Company by the rulers of Bengal, the area became a part of the British colony in South Asia, however with a special status restricting land ownership and migration of non-indigenous peoples into the region. A system of administration and jurisdiction was set up by the colonisers around three of the traditional chiefs, the different village headmen (mouza heads and local karbaris), mainly facilitating collection of land tax, providing recommendations for distribution and settlement of land, maintenance of land records, preservation and maintenance of community forest resources and settlement of social disputes in accordance with the indigenous peoples' customary laws. This system exists to this day. Plough cultivation was introduced and replaced the traditional extensive forms of swidden cultivation in the valleys.

When the end of colonialism in South Asia in 1947 led to the emergence of India and Pakistan, CHT became part of the state of Pakistan which continued the special status of the CHT as an "excluded area" up to the mid-60s. The implementation of the Karnafuli Multipurpose Project (1957-1963) – a hydro-electricity project creating the Kaptai Lake by damming the river Karnafuli – uprooted more than 100,000 people and inundated about 40 % of the most fertile plough land in the CHT. Development projects launched by the Pakistani government in the years following the completion of the dam encouraged non-indigenous people to move into the CHT for employment and business opportunities. These were the developments that triggered the unrest in the region still experienced until

today. Indigenous people began to become aware of their situation and started to organise themselves to resist these development initiated from outside that do not respond to their own needs.

In 1971, Bangladesh established itself as an independent nation state after a war of secession with Pakistan, making the Bengali language and culture as well as Bengali nationalism the foundations of society and political organisation. Demands by the CHT people to respect their culturally, linguistically and economically distinct identities and to protect them from further Bengali settlement were refused by the new leadership. In this context, the PCJSS was founded, as was its military wing, the Shanti Bahini, a few months later in January 1973. The government of Bangladesh had been suspicious of the indigenous leadership anyway: in 1971 some of them had opposed Bangladesh's separation from Pakistan. They took this as a pretext to militarise the CHT. In the face of rising militarisation and police atrocities, the peaceful democratic movement turned into armed struggle in 1975 for establishing self-determination, when all democratic avenues failed to draw the attention of the government. The state reacted with harsh counter-insurgency operations by the military and with a scheme of demographic engineering through planning the "transmigration" of landless Bengalis into the CHT. This further eroded the legitimacy of the state in the eyes of the CHT people.

In the late 1990s the time seemed ripe for a change in the dynamics of confrontation. The Bangladeshi government had begun to co-opt some of the indigenous leadership, which was tired of the war, into the mainstream system, the PCJSS had kept the door open for dialogue for resolving the CHT problem through political and peaceful means, the war became too costly for Bangladesh, the Indian government exerted pressure on both sides and support for war was falling. In 1997 negotiations led to the signature of an accord on peace, limited autonomy, respect to indigenous identity and development. A small faction of the Pahari Chatra Parishad (PCP-Hill Student's Council), Pahari Gana Parishad (Hill People's Council) and Hill Women's Council disagreed with the limited extent of this accord and broke away as the United People's Democratic Front which is said to have been responsible for acts of guerrilla warfare after 1997. However, significant provisions of the accord itself were not implemented, the newly founded CHT Regional Council has been left without a budget or decision-making powers, Bengalis are still encouraged to settle in the CHT, indigenous families continue to lose their lands, violence committed by army personnel continues to be reported. According to their own stand-

ards of a safe and prosperous life, poverty among indigenous people has increased. They do not see any institution that would be willing or able to listen to and address their grievances.

Whereas development activities could be used as elements for building peace, realities in CHT after 1997 draw a different picture. Until then, the CHT people had not received their share of the development money being distributed nationwide. From 1998, Bangladeshi NGOs as well as international agencies were among the first to arrive in CHT and design programmes that they found suitable to develop this part of Bangladesh. They were received with suspicion as priorities were not discussed with relevant local actors, such as the bodies mentioned in the peace accord. On the other hand, in the absence of these institutions only few indigenous-led NGOs were offering themselves as partners. The discriminatory and dominating civil and military administration disadvantaged local NGOs in the process of registration and therefore prevented them from becoming operative.

The main issues relate to land, forest resources, indigenous identity, security and political participation. Pressure on the land available for agriculture had already increased with the construction of the Kaptai dam. The encouragement of transmigration as a counter-insurgency measure led to a rapid increase in the number of Bengali settlers after 1979, even at times of civil war, and did not stop after the peace accord. By as early as 1991 Bengalis had become the largest ethnic group, accounting for nearly half of the population in the region whereas they had still been merely 13% in 1961. In many indigenous villages, especially close to the district capitals and along the roads, landowning families have become a minority. Land changes hands from indigenous villagers through occupation by transmigrants, forcible eviction by security forces and state agencies, non-recognition of the traditional land rights of the CHT people, indebtedness to money lenders. The Land Commission proposed by the peace accord has not yet been functioning effectively.

Forest resources are one of the backbones of traditional lifestyles and economy of the hill people. Their access to forests has been limited since colonial times by declaring areas as "reserved forests" that would be managed by the government. Often forests are encroached upon and presently private corporations extract wood for industrial and commercial purposes. Timber plantations mean ecologically unsound monocultures and bamboo used in house-building is beginning to become scarce.

Indigenous identity is under threat from a dominant state ideology that builds on Bengali culture or, more recently, on Islam as constituent aspects of nation-building. The CHT people have traditionally been Buddhists,

Hindus and, to a lesser Christians, being ethnically close to the Tibeto-Burman group. The eleven – or twelve, depending on the systematic – ethnic communities share elements of economic life style, especially the traditional system of swidden cultivation called "jum". Therefore, they often call themselves collectively as the Jumma people. At the moment differences among these communities are not emphasised. The shared history and present of exclusion from power becomes a constituting aspect of building collective identity. Only the larger of their languages have developed a script. However, education on all levels is conducted in Bengali and/or English languages and no importance is given to indigenous language, culture and learning. Their insistence on cultural rights has been termed "communal" by mainstream Bengali politicians, meaning an attitude that insists on a distinct cultural, religious and community ideology and derives special rights from this status.

Even today, CHT seems to be under siege. The region shows all the symptoms of a low-intensity war. The military presence is high and the militarisation of all spheres of society is obvious. Forcible eviction from land, random violence, threats and humiliation by military personnel, rapes and killing continue in an atmosphere of near impunity. The CHT people even have to obtain army approval for their access to medical, engineering and agriculture colleges and universities. Roads are constructed and repaired by the army instead of by civilian institutions. The villagers feel little protected from violence committed by the security forces. Their political leaders are powerless and their local headmen cannot protect them because they themselves are not sufficiently aware of the mechanisms to address these issues.

Political participation through a limited autonomy of the CHT has been a demand of the CHT people since shortly after Bangladesh's independence. Today, the power lies in the hands of the district commissioners and the army seems to have the last word. The Regional Council stipulated by the peace accord is not functioning yet. Not even the development activities organised through NGOs – as according to the peace accord – are coordinated by the Regional Council. The demand for concrete steps to increase political participation by indigenous people in local bodies has been opposed by a Bengali-founded Equal Rights Group demanding equal opportunities for Bengali settlers. These generally belong to poor families and have moved to CHT with the direct and indirect support of government machineries hoping for a better future. Here they have often not yet received land titles and therefore according to the CHT Peace Accord provisions are not considered permanent residents of the region.

The main conflict lines as seen by members of HTNF:

1. Conflict between settlers and indigenous people of CHT about land.

2. Indigenous people of CHT experience discrimination by the state.

3. Indigenous political groups (PCJSS and others) are in conflict with government about the implementation of the 1997 accord.

4. Conflict between the Bangladeshi security forces deployed in CHT and the indigenous population.

5. Conflict between the traditional hill peoples' institutions and the general administration of Bangladesh.

6. Conflict between Islamic political groups on one side and non-Muslims and secular people about the character of the society.

7. Conflict between extreme Bangladeshi nationalists and indigenous organisations about national strategy and policy concerning minorities.

(result from a workshop in Bandarban, 15 July 2005)

Manipur

"When we talk about peace, our first thought is: who will lose and who will win?" said one of the people interviewed in Imphal, the capital of the north-eastern Indian state of Manipur. Mistrust and tensions run high between different ethnic groups in the state and every day the news carries reports about killings, fighting and capture of insurgents. In July 2005, students belonging to Naga tribes blocked the highway connecting Imphal and the surrounding valley with India's mainland. This created fears that essential goods would soon become scarce. Society is divided along ethnic lines. Militarisation of every day life is high. Insurgent groups deriving their legitimacy each from their own ethnic group fight against the Indian military, but also often one against another. Manipur is in a situation of low intensity war.

The tensions in the state of Manipur are part of the difficult integration of North Eastern India into the Indian state after independence. Manipur is situated on the eastern border of India with Myanmar, between the states of Nagaland to the north, Assam to the west and Mizoram to the south. Historical causes of the present conflict constellations lie in the rise of Naga nationalism during British colonisation and the merger of the princedom of Manipur with the Indian Union.

An area covering large parts of western Myanmar, present Nagaland as well as parts of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Manipur is traditionally the settlement region of tribes who over a period of more than a hundred years increasingly identified themselves collectively as Nagas. Towards the end of colonialism Naga nationalists aspired to their own independent country between India and Myanmar, but were sidelined by the political decision-makers. They eventually took up arms in a liberation struggle which still is going on. Naga tribes form the majority population living in the northern hill areas of Manipur. Being culturally and religiously distinct from the dominant Meitei population they feel more affinity to Nagaland than to their own state to whom they claim to belong only for historic reasons.

Manipur was under the rule of King Budhachandra Singh when British rule ended on the Subcontinent, a monarchy based on the support of the majority Hindu Meitei population, about two-thirds of the total number of Manipuris. The Meitei live predominantly in the densely populated Imphal valley which only covers about 10% of the surface of the state. Nagas and other hill tribes felt only nominally ruled by the king and enjoyed large liberties. The ethnic composition constantly changed with groups migrating across formal borders. Soon the king was challenged by a popular movement demanding democratic participation and independence. This motivated the Indian central government to act quickly in order to avoid complications like those in Kashmir or Hyderabad. In September 1949, the King of Manipur was forced to sign an agreement about the merger with the Indian Union and less than a month later Manipur became part of India without involving the population in the decision-making in any way. Many Manipuris resented this and gained public support when hopes for economic development in the region were dashed. Since the 1960s Manipur has undergone different phases of political unrest and violence.

In 1980, the Indian government introduced the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) and declared Manipur a "disturbed area". Under this act the military is vested with special rights in the interest of guaranteeing

security and the budget for military spending is considerably increased, creating a vested interest in this status. Fighting around the time of budget allotments are seen in this light by many civil society actors in the region: they suspect that they serve to create instability in order to justify a continuing military presence. As a consequence there is a high level impunity for military actions – impunity being expressly legitimised by the AFSPA. Extrajudicial killings and rapes have been reported. Low compensations to family members of the people killed serve to keep these cases out of public attention and out of courts. But a public protest movement led by women's groups exposes the results of the AFSPA.

In 1992, the Naga-Kuki conflict emerged as a new dimension to the unstable situation. The hill regions of Manipur are populated by feudally organised indigenous people of different origins. While the tribes belonging to the Naga group are in a majority, there are more than thirty other indigenous groups living in the same region, among these the Kukis. Like most of the hill people, the Kukis are protestant Christians, many of them Baptists. The Kukis are originally a nomadic tribe who entered the region in the 19th century from somewhere in Myanmar. Nagas had understood that land given "temporarily" to Kuki settlers would remain Naga property and be returned to their communities when the Kukis moved on. Today their villages are close to Naga settlements. There were local tensions about the distribution of limited resources – especially tillable land. When Nagas raised their voice for the establishment of Nagalim, the Kuki leadership feared that any Indian government agreement with the Nagas would lead to themselves becoming discriminated against and expected the Indian government to support the demand for autonomous Kuki regions.

The Naga leadership, however, believed that the Kukis were used by the Indian and Manipuri governments to break their resistance by dividing the hill people among themselves and to justify the Indian army presence as well as the objective of Manipuri state integrity that Meitei political leaders insist on. The war between militant groups from both ethnic groups and "pacification operations" by the Indian army caused destroyed villages as well as more than a thousand deaths until the end of the last century. The unstable situation generated opportunities for different groups to extort money and set up elements of parallel economies. Development efforts stagnated.

Meanwhile Manipuri politics succeeded in making the Meitei language the official state language and in introducing its old script into the school syllabus. The indigenous minorities felt further marginalised. Today, many

of these minorities have either brought out militant groups or placed themselves under the protection of insurgents belonging to more powerful groups. There are also several armed groups among the dominant Meitei community.

Trafficking of arms, drugs and human beings are relevant economic factors in the region and finance the wars. Disillusionment about their future employment perspectives drives young people into rebel outfits. HIV/Aids rates are among the highest in India. Ecological destruction, especially of the forests, and large-scale development projects cause migration from the rural areas into the towns. No concrete policy exists that could deal with the decrease in natural resources. Trust in political parties and in the administration to deal with these problems is low. But rebel movements are also increasingly perceived as structures primarily working for their own benefits. While in the early 1980s four armed groups fought civil wars based on ideologies of justice and liberation, today's Manipur has about 45 armed groups with about 50,000 armed personnel, many of them surviving on forceful extortion. Resources belonging to the local people are drained out this way. War has become an economy and even development money is feeding into this system. It is – though unstable – a system that sustains itself and does not generate strong vested interests in peace.

This explains the paradoxical difficulty around peace discourses quoted in the beginning of this chapter. If any of the actors opts for a peace process, he is suspected of having hopes for gaining larger benefits than he is already gaining from the continuation of war. Since 2000 open fighting between Naga and Kuki militant groups has diminished, but the tension continues. In June 2001, the Indo-Naga ceasefire of 1997 was extended outside Nagaland. Just as all issues concerning the major demands were left for future negotiations, now additional tensions between Naga and Meitei groups surfaced as many Meiteis considered this to be putting Manipur's territorial integrity at disposal. None of the interventions in the conflict have succeeded in going beyond ethnicised politics and thus increasing polarisation and complexity. Conflict theoretician Friedrich Glasl's saying that contradictory conflict dynamics are the driving forces behind the escalation of conflicts is illustrated well by the situation in Manipur: while complexity is actively increased, perception of and discourse about the conflict are reduced to less and less prominent elements. Here it is ethnicity that becomes the primary factor that actors use in order to define their position and the actions of their opponents.

Women have been among the main victims of this low-intensity war. Belonging to a patriarchal society, women have rarely been public power holders. They bear a large responsibility for keeping up the local, especially rural, economy. Globalisation and large development projects imposed from outside which have eroded traditional forms of subsistence or made them obsolete, increase the difficulty. Militarisation has created an atmosphere of insecurity that confines women to their households and restricts movement. Counter-insurgency measures leave women most vulnerable. The arena of action for women continuously decreased as can be seen also from socio-economic data showing, for example, that participation in the labour market was lower in 1991 than in 1961, literacy rates among women have only been growing slowly.

However, there is also another side to history. In the centre of Manipur's capital Imphal a monument reminds of the non-violent resistance of Manipuri women against the effects of colonisation of the princedom. Since 1904, women in Manipur are known to have raised their voices against injustice. Again today women are among the first to stand up against the violence. The Meira Paibis, a group of mainly Meitei women, follow armed vehicles at night with torches in their hands in order to discourage military personnel from extrajudicial killings and other human rights violations. They are active against drug abuse and trafficking. Women organised in different groups like the Meira Paibis, the Naga Women's Union Manipur und die Kuki Mothers Association have been protesting with hunger strikes for the abolition of the AFSPA which is responsible for the politicisation of women in Manipur. In July 2004, a group of women stripped in public in front of the Kangla, the big old palace and temple complex in the heart of Imphal and then headquarters of the Indian army. They demanded an end to violence, especially sexualised violence. Cases like the killing of Manorama Devi in 2004 have united women of all ethnic groups in their demand that the focus should be shifted towards ways of stopping violence against women.

But political groups from different sides also make efforts to use these protests to justify their own objectives. Not always have women themselves been able to look beyond the boundaries of their own ethnic groups as even women's associations are ethnicised and partly subscribe to the aims of their respective group. However, the view has been increasing that women's concerns are shared and more global than that and that cooperation is needed to break the cycle of violence and counter violence.

Civil War

Nepal

"The day belongs to the King, the night to the Maoists." This is a common saying in many areas of Nepal where a civil war has cost more than 15,000 lives since 1996. A ceasefire and peace negotiations broke down in August 2004 and all democratic institutions in Nepal have been suspended by King Gyanendra since February 2005 in a royal take-over of powers. The Maoists control large parts of the country, but have failed to establish democratic systems where they are in command. Major roads remain under the control of the army. However, their checkpoints are evacuated as soon as night falls. The army conducts searches for rebels in rural areas and both sides punish those who are considered "collaborators" with the other. Violence and political instability have overshadowed the need to address Nepal's economic and social problems. Villagers feel caught up in a civil war which they often do not identify with. Only recently, a new cease-fire was negotiated in April 2006 after the king was forced by a people's movement to reinstall the parliament.

The Kingdom of Nepal, situated along the southern range of the Himalayan mountains between India and Chinese administered Tibet, has never been colonised by external powers. It is ruled by a monarchic system which has been challenged several times by modernist and democratic movements over the past hundred years. In the late 1980s a democracy movement led to the elaboration of a new democratic constitution in 1990 that allowed for a multi-party system in the framework of a constitutional monarchy. This process and the following years were marked by fundamental disagreements among important actors. Leaders of the indigenous peoples for example left the constitution-building process when it became obvious that Nepal would remain a Hindu kingdom not giving equal rights to other religious groups and not recognising the identities of other peoples. The Maoist faction of the communists left after a few years of parliamentary exercise, decided to discontinue its participation in constitutional activities and turned to mobilising the population along all major conflict lines.

The remaining political parties became entangled in personal feuds and corruption, limited by scarce resources available in one of the poorest countries of the world. In constant suspicion of each other and of the royal court's political aspirations they were not able to tackle any of the major issues in the country satisfactorily. An emerging civil society did not pro-

vide an extra-parliamentarian cross-check to official politics as most NGOs were dependent on foreign donors and through their biographies or through family connections – if not directly and overtly – linked to one or the other political party. In the eyes of the majority of the population this system was discredited when in 1996 the Maoists launched a "People's War" and began to "liberate" some of the remote districts. Tendencies within the royal family to take back democratic concessions gained momentum after the murder of the royal family on 1 June 2001 and the accession to throne of the present king Gyanendra, who staged a coup on 1 February 2005 and transformed Nepal into absolute monarchy. The following repression pushed those sections of civil society and of the political party movement who were not already brought into the state machinery and into alibi institutions towards the positions of the Maoist rebels.

These political struggles have only had a negative impact on the rural population. A people divided into more than 100 different communities and speaking about 70 languages and dialects, living largely in regions with difficult accessibility and depending on subsistence production in an era that through globalisation has surrounded them by monetary economy, has tried to secure its survival under increasingly difficult circumstances. To this day, Nepal remains a country dominated by a male leadership hailing from a few upper middle class high caste Hindu families. This is true for the Maoist leadership as well. Women and leaders from other backgrounds are only coming up slowly and have to face enormous obstacles and threats.

The Root Causes of Conflict in Nepal are as Follows:

• Ownership of land lies in the hands of a few families. The vast majority of the rural population is either landless or owns too little land to secure a reasonable standard of living for their families. Some of the land owned by landowners is not used productively at all. Landowners are well connected to the centres of political power in Nepal. This issue was among the first and foremost taken up by the Maoists and put onto the political agenda. Whereas in some "liberated areas" land redistribution has taken place, in others the villagers have not profited from the land left behind by landowners.

• Social, economic and political powers are assumed by higher castes in the Hindu varnashrama system, which stratifies society into clusters of castes along professional lines determined by birth and prevents mobility between these groups. Members of the priest castes and of the warrior

castes, Brahmins and Kshatriyas, dominate this system. In Nepal they control the state and society. Political struggles largely take place within these two caste groups as all parties, including the Maoists, are led by members from these castes. This is also the case for most NGOs, including those active in the field of human rights.

- Indigenous people do not feel respected and in practice are treated as second-class citizens. In the past, most of the indigenous groups were generally counted as part of the Hindu population, not considering Buddhism as a separate religion, for example. But the recently adopted legal recognition of the existence of indigenous people in Nepal, does not create sufficient space for the development of their identities, cultures, religions, languages and forms of life. Indigenous people, who have strengthened their political organisation and cohesion since the early 1990s by creating indigenous associations and demanding equal rights, still feel largely excluded from participation in society. Maoist efforts to mobilise along these lines have only partly succeeded in gaining sympathy from these groups.

- Women in all ethnic and religious groups are excluded from decision-making. The traditional Hindu dharma defines the rights and duties in terms subordinate to men. In many indigenous groups, women have had no rights to speak at male-dominated meetings. Trafficking of girls and women from poverty-stricken areas continues to exist with the tacit approval of all segments of society, including the villages themselves. Women suffer from a high work load and they are the first victims of poverty. Social mobility for the majority of women in Nepal is outside the range of possibility. Though Maoists have recruited women fighters, this does not seem to have changed the position of women in society fundamentally. Women complain that they have to provide food and shelter to fighters and therefore are targeted by counter-insurgency.

- Kathmandu and the surrounding valley is the absolute centre of economic activities and political decision-making. There is a strong divide into the urban and rural worlds, so that even towns outside the valley are of relatively little importance for Nepali politics. This is accentuated by the remoteness and difficult accessibility of large parts of the country. Therefore rebel control of districts outside the Kathmandu valley is seen as only a limited challenge to political power in the centre.

- Nepal's economic development is limited by its geographical situation, a high demographic pressure, a low standard of education, few natural resources, a small modern – i.e. non-feudal – sector with insufficient

availability of free capital, a dependency on foreign aid. The war has stopped investment in the country, discouraged tourism and increased military spending, thus decreasing development possibilities and increasing the country's dependency.

These historical developments and circumstances manifest themselves in six major conflict lines that are visible in the Nepal:

1. **The political conflict between the royal court and the established political parties supported by large parts of civil society about a return to multi-party parliamentarian democracy.**

2. **The violent military conflict of the Maoist rebels supported by parts of the rural population with the royal court, the army, the established political leadership and the landowners about the future of monarchy, the character of the political system and the distribution of means of production, especially the agricultural land.**

3. **The conflict about the recognition of Nepal as a multi-ethnic multi-lingual and multi-religious country between the indigenous non-violent movements and the Hindu establishment.**

4. **The latent conflict between women and male-dominated society about the existing discrimination of women in Nepal.**

5. **The caste conflict challenging the rule of high caste Hindus.**

6. **The growing discontent among sections of the youth about lack of future opportunities and foreign influence in Nepal, especially influence from India, manifesting itself in riots and student unrest.**

The Maoist rebels have been trying to mobilise on all of these six conflict lines. The present king, already suffering from a loss of credibility due to the lack of transparency concerning the murder of his predecessor, is party to all of these conflicts. This creates a nearly bi-polar situation which with the increase in violence and the abolition of civil liberties forces all other actors to take a position with one or the other side. In recent years, the conflict dynamics have developed even more complexity because of powerful international interests in making the rich water and hydro-electric resources available to the growing markets in South Asia.

Unfortunately, civil society itself has not been strong enough to take up issues as successfully as the Maoists did. This includes human rights organisations which have established themselves as NGOs in urban centres without nourishing strong popular movements supporting them. NGOs today largely lack credibility as independent actors, internal cohesion, mutual solidarity as well as the will to expose themselves and risk repression.

NGOs as parts of dominant society most importantly lack the sensitivity to understand the effects of power dynamics on the perspectives and aspirations of the discriminated and disadvantaged segments of Nepalese society. They are often considered paternalistic ("working for the disadvantaged") and do not understand how to support marginalised sections of society in their own efforts. They are distant, physically as well as in their thinking. They are not trusted by these marginalised groups. This makes them feel powerless in the present polarisation and victimised by the growing state control on their activities and turn to foreign support.

Contrary to these established NGOs, social movements have increasingly been able to raise the women's and the indigenous peoples' issues. Their associations experience themselves being caught up in the present polarisation of forces. They have recourse to a social basis, they can develop their own networks and function with little external support. This often makes them less vulnerable to political repression than the NGOs. This is especially true for the indigenous movements. Their leadership often has an ambivalent relationship to the Maoist rebels. Though they disagree with the methods of the "People's War" and they mistrust the proclaimed objectives of their leaders, they see that it is the Maoists who are the only political actors taking up their main concerns.

The Peace Builders

The following section introduces the principal actors of this study. They are non-governmental grassroots organisations, church-based institutions and networks of organisations active in the field of development. Some of them focus mainly on activities raising the awareness of the poor and marginalised, others focus mainly on social or economic aspects of development. A few of them, but not all, have peace work and conflict transformation as the main objective of their work. Most of the organisations presented here have adopted a gender sensitive approach to their work. Some organisations work specifically on women's rights, others have a special desk focussing on women's issues while working with the community as a whole.

While governments and international institutions have frequently demonstrated their inability to deal with internal conflict – very often they are parties to the conflict themselves – "citizens as peacemakers", as Ed Garcia called them in his book Pilgrim Voices a decade ago, continue to struggle with the challenges that violent conflict provides. These organisations provide hope that courageous and sustainable efforts to address conflict, its causes and underlying patterns can make a difference. They also provide opportunities for learning when dealing with difficult questions as to the constructive role that grassroots activists can play, which level of society to focus on in order to make interventions useful or the right time to approach stakeholders of power in conflict.

Their contributions have been referred to in the reflection of peace practices for the past 15 years, but received far too little attention as compared to "official" diplomacy. Sometimes this comparative silence has been beneficial as it has helped local actors to play a role beyond polarised public positions held by the parties to the conflict. They could maintain a level of confidentiality that enabled them to develop trust with those who were able to move only small steps ahead. Sometimes these grassroots peace builders at first glance appear to be trouble makers when they raise issues of justice that are discussed in society little or not at all. In these cases, putting the issue of power relations on the public agenda opens a space to generate dialogue and develop avenues for their resolution.

However, peace-building needs support, be it provided by bridge-builders among the conflicting parties themselves or by people of solidarity from outside the conflict context. EED has supported the activities of these organisations through a long-term partnership which was additionally

strengthened by its PISA programme: "Peace in South Asia". Together with other local and international agencies, EED will continue to cooperate with these partner organisations that make substantial contributions to peace and security in the region. This is not to release the state from its responsibility to guarantee that its citizens can satisfy their needs and provide opportunities for their vital development. Peace will only prevail in South Asia when all actors contribute to developing strong political institutions that cooperate critically in sustaining transformation processes.

Institute for Social Democracy, India

The Institute for Social Democracy (ISD) was formed in Delhi in 2004 as an offshoot of the Trust for Secular and Democratic Values with a lot of experience in educational work and awareness-raising against fanaticism and fundamentalism. ISD strives for a secular and democratic society that is intolerant of any form of exploitation. Therefore it is part of various civil society networks focussing on minority rights, human rights and peace. It closely cooperates with gender-justice-oriented and feminist groups and organisations.

ISD mainly intervenes in the Hindi speaking states in the north of India. In a few cases it has established contacts and undertaken programmes in other South Asian countries neighbouring India. The organisation educates and trains activists and staff of community-based and grassroots organisations on issues of communalism, caste and gender discrimination, globalisation, nuclear disarmament. Around these issues it develops and supports peace campaigns on international and national levels, but above all on the local level. Through its training programmes it has developed an informal network of grassroots activists who remain in touch with the office.

ISD has an internal policy of encouraging learning among its staff and including them in decision-making. Though there is a clear division of tasks among staff members, all are encouraged to get involved with the content-related work and to discuss and develop their own understanding and positions on the issues. As these are considered matters of citizens' concern, ISD plays the function of developing multipliers in a society where NGOs are usually faced with a high level of staff turn over when it comes to the younger, often career-oriented generation. Somebody who has worked with ISD will take along new learning about attitudes and democratic values. ISD's programme therefore is not only projects; it also includes lifestyle and the deep concern of the organisation's leading personalities.

The founder and director of ISD is Khurshid Anwar, a north Indian civil liberties' activist with a background in socialist thinking. Unlike many others from the leftist movements in India, Khurshid's thinking has considerably developed new approaches to conflict in Indian society. Without compromising a thorough analysis of root causes of segmentation of society and the development of fundamentalist forces, he has been thinking about how culture could be used to break the paradigms of intolerance, injustice and exclusion. It is his love for poetry and literature that made him think about which role these could play to civilise crude expressions of intolerance and efforts to "purify" Indian culture. Based on these findings, ISD has developed the approach of strengthening 'composite heritage', commonly shared values, symbols and cultural practices in the Indian Subcontinent which go beyond the divides between the different religious and ethnic communities. ISD holds courses and is working on a trainer's handbook focussing on how the commonly shared heritage can be strengthened and used in order to connect people across divides and therefore decrease tension and violence.

For Khurshid and his team it is crucial to be open to learn from field experience and move on to be better equipped to struggle for new and better approaches to promote people's rights in a pluralist society.

Women's Action and Resource Unit SAHR WARU, Gujarat, India

SAHR WARU, the Women's Action and Resource Unit previously worked for women's empowerment and advancement as part of the Women's Programme – Sanchetana in several pockets of the urban poor in Ahmedabad (from 1983 to 2001) where there were women's groups who also formed collectives for fighting for justice and equality. It began as a separate organisation in 1999 and was registered as such in 2002. Its general fields of action are:

1. Women's empowerment and awareness-raising,

2. Literacy and education among women and girls,

3. Legal aid network across Ahmedabad, which will fight for justice, and work for ending gender-based violence (domestic and communal),

4. Promoting cultural, inter-religious tolerance, peace and harmony through its networks.

SAHR WARU is a women's rights and human rights organisation working for gender justice, peace and equality. Its activities include programmes against violence against women, health programmes, the development of saving schemes, legal aid to women, as well as livelihood activities like making brooms, kites and skill-giving activities like tailoring.

In their own words:

SAHR WARU, the harbinger of a new dawn for women, coined by joining of the words "SAHR" meaning "morning" in Urdu and "WARU" meaning "come" in Malyalam is an awakening for equality, justice and the inclusion of women as women with their diverse needs and within their multiple identities for a just social order. "WARU" is also an acronym for Women's Action and Resource Unit.

SAHR WARU is a women's and human rights organisation working for gender equality, social justice and peace through four main approaches – community-based action work, information dissemination, research and documentation and building alliances and networks.

SAHR WARU's mission is to strive for gender justice and women's equality and SAHR WARU believes in secularism, pluralism and social justice.

SAHR WARU's main objectives are:

- **To work to strengthen and empower women for equality and gender justice.**
- **To work for social justice and human rights of marginalised communities.**
- **To work for a plural and multicultural society that is free of caste and religion-based discrimination.**

As an independent organisation SAHR WARU began to expand and deepen this work and set out to move to the nearby rural areas of Ahmedabad and Mehsana district. A human rights campaign to this end was held in December 2001. The campaigns on women's rights and peace involved poster exhibitions, street plays and competitions held in schools.

SAHR WARU moved on to new areas of Ahmedabad, with a new vision and challenges after witnessing the genocide in the state of Gujarat in 2002. Responding to the immediate needs of relief and reconciliation and moving on to the legal aid support, the process of seeking justice has taken the organisation a long way with the survivors of the violence, from supporting them in the initial stages to trying to bring them back to lead a normal life through different programmes and activities which also involved social and religious functions: organising a community lunch, doing the 'iftar' (breaking of fast) during the Islamic month of Ramadan, inviting to weddings and other social occasions.

SAHR WARU maintains a small office in Ahmedabad and rented project centres in some of the neighbourhoods where the organisation intervenes, including space for meetings, library and sometimes computer facilities. These centres are used by its field staff and frequented by members of the local community, especially women.

Olakh, A Feminist Documentation Resource and Counselling Centre, Gujarat, India

Olakh a Gujarati word that means "identity" in English is the name of a feminist women's group based in Vadodara, Gujarat. This name has been chosen to highlight the organisation's vision of "a physical and emotional space for women to mutually share, learn and grow with pride and dignity to proudly assert their identities."

It is based on a great deal of personal commitment and voluntary work as well as experience in development activities. Since 1996 it has run the Feminist Documentation and Resource Centre in Vadodara. This is open to women, girls and men wanting a fundamental change of the existing discriminative structure of gender relations. Since the very inception of Olakh the major thrust has been towards creating a space for women, a space which is warm, safe, confidential and non-judgemental.

Olakh's work is founded on the analysis that there is a need for changing perspective, based on two experiences of reality:

1. There is a lack of physical and emotional spaces for women, where they can share their experiences and thoughts with other women, support one another or even be with themselves or to express their own contradictions, frustrations, dilemmas and discrimination within and outside families.

2. A wide gap and hierarchical gulfs exist between grassroots level activists and 'professionals' or intellectuals due to:

- Lack of information and knowledge of feminist literature in the local language.

- Lack of skills to articulate experiential reality, of women's life experiences and the domination of English language in intellectual discourse.

- Lack of feminist perspective and vision from planning to implementation within the development field.

The activities of Olakh include at its main office the establishment of an issue-based documentation and resource centre with a library as well as a counselling and intervention centre for healing and support. From here there are outreach activities to empower adolescent girls and women and to assist with conflict resolution and transformation. A support group for single women – women outside the marriage institution – has been created, workshops, seminars and courses have been organised. Furthermore, Olakh has lobbied and done advocacy work on women's issues in Vadodara town as well as in the surrounding rural areas. Action-based research has been conducted on some important issues. Presently Olakh is involved in a "Participatory Action Research on Gujarat Carnage 2002 – marginalized women's perception on safety and security".

During the earthquake in 2001, the communal violence in 2002 and the flood in 2005, Olakh used its personal and financial resources as well as its influence as an organisation for relief and rehabilitation work. In all these cases Olakh's activists intervened when they were demanded to become active by the circumstances or by the people whom they had been working with and who trusted them. These were more "fire-fighting" types of intervention based on immediate needs than strategically planned interventions. They were anyhow efficient as, contrary to other agencies, Olakh knew the target groups of relief from earlier programmes.

The communal violence of 2002 posed important questions for the Olakh team. As activists in a feminist organisation, its team members were very sensitive to power relations and issues of oppression. In this sense they analysed the events and their own activities. They discovered that in order to be better equipped to serve society in this critical instance they had to have a more diverse team which up to then had been a majority community dominated one. Conscious efforts were made at Olakh to have people from different religious, social, linguistic, cultural and educational

In their own words:

Vision:

To create a humane society which affirms diversities and equity, celebrates inclusion and, complimentarily, that walks towards sustainable peace.

Mission:

To centre-stage feminist perspective and practices to challenge the existing structures and systems of discrimination and dominance - patriarchy, caste, class, race and ethnicity, to create new forms of human relationships and corresponding institutions based on a feminist world-view.

Objectives:

- Create safe, supportive and non-judgmental spaces for women, where we all learn, share, heal and grow to our full potentialities.

- Acknowledge the existing knowledge base of women, and build new feminist knowledge by recognising the struggles and contributions of women in the social, cultural, political and economic sphere.

- Spread feminist consciousness and promote women's empowerment processes.

- Build feminist activists and thinkers to strengthen women's movements and network with other broader movement.

- Advocate and lobby for macro level policy changes that reflect micro-level realities and experiences of women.

The central focus of our work is strengthening women's leadership. We see women as actors, rather than mere victims of violence, leading the process of reconciliation and peace. In our approach we use strategies like dialogue, group-based interventions, and information sharing on laws, policies and rights, to extend women's skills and knowledge, and develop their perspectives on key issues.

backgrounds in the team. A women-friendly, secular organisational structure and work culture was evolved. They updated the list of holidays and included socio-religious diversity through the same. Similar changes needed to be made in the organisation's board.

They organised internal study circles to reflect on their own beliefs, prejudices and perceptions and thus built a strong basis for intervention into society. Relevant literature on communal conflict, social conflict in general and conflict transformation was added to the library. The issue of diversity was included into other ongoing activities, as a topic as well as through the representation of different communities in the staff and at different levels of decision making.

Diaconical Ministries of the Church of South India

"Translating faith into social transformation" is the objective of the Diaconical Ministries (DM) of the Church of South India (CSI). The Church of South India covers the four southern states of India. In 1998 the CSI created the Diaconical Ministries as its social action arm to initiate and facilitate different social programmes, especially for poor communities. Many members of the CSI belong to the Dalit community and experience discrimination and marginalisation. DM has been involved in organising the marginalised, be they Christians or not, and hopes to finally also enable the church to transform itself. The Church of South India, as a large institution serving the whole Christian community, has to encompass different interest groups within its membership and is therefore often slow to react to changes. Generally speaking, many Christians in South India still withdraw themselves from public debate and perceive themselves as a minority in the society. They expect the same attitude from their church. The DM perceives itself as the more progressive part of the CSI.

Though the institutional church only slowly engages in inter-religiously-oriented activities, it has been instrumental in inter-denominational dialogue, leading to the formation of the Communion of the Churches in India comprising of the CSI, Church of North India and the Mar Thoma Church. In practice, DM has already gone further: many programmes of the DM are ecumenical in character and work with different religious communities, not only Christians. In South Tamil Nadu, the DM runs 35 social projects.

Since 1999 DM has implemented a peace project in order to establish communal harmony in four dioceses in the south of Tamil Nadu where caste conflicts are endemic: Madurai, Trichy Tanjore, Thirunelveli and

Kanyakumari. It is the only peace-related project in the region and it has to work with very limited resources which force it to rely on local capacities. The project is run from the project coordination office in Dindigul. Each diocese has its own project office with one organiser as staff in addition to the project coordinator. Initially work was started in 20 villages per each diocese. The full-time staff identifies conflict areas, promotes local peace groups, organises peace fora, encourages and trains peace volunteers. The objective of this project is to promote communal harmony so that Dalits and mixed caste groups would eventually join forces and create an emancipated social power in the region. So far 25 villages have set up peace fora; about 400 peace volunteers have been trained.

HAC Alliance for Socio-Religious Harmony, Pakistan

The HAC Alliance for Socio-Religious Harmony is a coalition of three distinct organisations jointly implementing a programme for peace and justice in some major cities of Punjab. These organisations are the Human Friends Organisation founded in 1995, Awaz-e-Niswan (Voice of Women) founded in 2001 and CATHE Foundation established in 1999. All three organisations have a Christian background, however do not work exclusively with Christians in Punjab. In particular, their health and educational programmes and their programme for communal harmony target local communities and therefore address members of different religions.

All three organisations have experience in different fields of development intervention. Human Friends Organisation (HFO) wants to "empower and strengthen people to fight against discrimination and violence in all aspects of life through the restoration of peace and the uplift of human values". It intervenes in Lahore and Kasur districts mainly with women, children and community leaders. With children, HFO has worked on children's rights and provided non-formal education to children. In order to empower women it has done awareness-raising on gender and development, reproductive health and women's rights and run skill enhancement centres with sewing classes and classes for beauticians. The peace and communal harmony programme includes peace education for children at schools and teachers, it has brought religious leaders together and has developed good contacts to religious, political and social leaders.

Awaz-e-Niswan (Voice of Women) is a women's organisation initially trying to empower single mothers who are female heads of households. It is running an awareness programme for women giving domestic and factory workers literacy classes, including health education, legal awareness

training and social education. It provides women with entrepreneurial skills and stands publicly against violence against women. Awaz-e-Niswan has created its own theatre group that produces educational theatre shown on streets or during events. In its theatre plays, the links between different forms of violence like communalism and violence against women are drawn.

CATHE Foundation Pakistan works in the areas of socio-religious harmony, reproductive health education, women empowerment and environment protection mainly with marginalised women and children as target groups. "CATHE" stands for Community Awareness and Training on Human Rights and Education. It seeks to organise communities to develop collective action in order to solve their problems in the field of development. In the field of peace work CATHE Foundation Pakistan has, among other things, organised peace fora with community leaders from different religions, organised shared feasts and ecumenical peace prayers and conducted a women's conference on peace and harmony.These three organisations founded the HAC Alliance in April 2004 when they discovered that they were working in similar fields to bring about communal harmony and contribute to peace, but that each of their efforts remained limited and with little lasting impact. They decided to put their strengths, expertise and experiences together to reach out further into society. The Socio-Religious Programme that HAC Alliance launched at the beginning of 2005 hopes to reach different levels of society. Through the work of a theatre group they want to reach the grassroots of the communities and raise awareness on issues of inter-religious tolerance and peaceful coexistence. This is planned to be backed up by written material on a culture for peace and justice. Then they want to reach out to leaders within the local communities, organise them in groups and train them to become peacemakers in their locality. On the district level, they intend to bring together religious leaders with more influence as well as other actors, including media personnel. These committees are supposed to develop avenues for future cooperation. The approach is built on experience with communal violence and tension between Muslims, Christians, Hindus and among Muslims of different denominations that has happened in the past years.

Hill Tracts NGO Forum, Bangladesh

The Hill Tracts NGO Forum (HTNF) unites 64 member organisations in the three hill districts. It was founded in 1999 in order to increase local participation in the planning and implementation of development activi-

ties. It hopes to achieve this by coordinating the activities of local NGOs in the CHT, and to provide necessary information and technical support to them. In this context, local NGO means a NGO composed of and run by permanent residents of the CHT, including indigenous people and permanent Bengali residents, but excluding recently-arrived government sponsored settlers.

HTNF was created on the basis of the Rangamati Declaration of 19 December 1998 which emphasised that earlier mistakes should not be repeated when development programmes were being shaped. For this objective, local indigenous knowledge and insights would be valued and made use of, activities harmful to the natural environment or the fabric of local society be stopped, the provisions of the peace accord be implemented and indigenous participation in decision-making ensured.

According to its constitution, HTNF is committed to a democratically elected structure and a transparent and democratic manner of decision-making. The coordinator and other staff members of the secretariat are accountable to an Executive Committee (EC) of 15 members, who are elected for two years by the general council. The EC is responsible for the execution of projects and programmes of HTNF and for hiring and supervising the required staff. The general council, consisting of members from each member organisation, is the highest policy-making body. There are

General objectives of the Hill Tracts NGO Forum:

- **To strengthen the activities of its members (local NGOs);**
- **To provide its members with necessary information about the development process;**
- **To provide technical support to its members;**
- **To play a watchdog role in the development process to help ensure that development activities are in conformity with the rights, needs and cultures of the different peoples of the CHT;**
- **To represent the local NGOs in negotiations with the government and other major actors in the development process and to act as the NGOs' spokesperson**

also three district-level HTNF committees in the three hill districts of the CHT with a similar structure to that of the central organisation. HTNF has its main office in Rangamati.

Each district committee of HTNF has its specific character. In Khagrachari district, the role of women in its structures is comparatively strong. Most members of the Women's Resource Network, which is the new women's cell of HTNF created in 2004, live and work here. The Rangamati district committee has the largest number of member NGOs and some of the most experienced in the field of development. However, their focus is largely determined by these activities and consequent issues around professional project execution. To a lesser degree they are aware of the peace-building potential that its proximity to the political centre of CHT may contain. The number and influence of member organisations active in the field of human rights and civic education is felt in Bandarban. A different culture of analytical discourse has been established.

So far HTNF itself has not been able to obtain registration as a local NGO or as society due to bureaucracy. This lack of official status creates obstacles to its activities because the network cannot enter partnerships with international donors and organise programmes that are beyond the capacities of its individual member NGOs. In this regard it is therefore in a position of disadvantage as compared to national development NGOs, also active in the CHT. In the beginning of 2006 the situation deteriorated further when due to state repression HTNF was forced to close its headquarters' office in Rangamati. They were told that no activities will be accepted as long as they are not registered.

United NGO Mission to Manipur, India

United NGO Mission to Manipur (UNMM) was founded in 1994/95 as a response to the Naga-Kuki war in Manipur and to needs for capacity-building among the NGO community in Manipur. The spreading of violence threatened development projects so much that leaders of NGOs in consultation with their donors ICCO and EED (at that time EZE) felt the need to look beyond their ethnic group interests and develop a common platform. Although initially some of these organisations felt that UNMM could itself become an implementing organisation or a structure channelling and controlling funds, they identified areas that could be better taken up by the network, such as lobbying and advocacy with government, developing training, capacity-building and awareness-raising. Over the years, promoting peace efforts and reducing violence became the main issues that

UNMM stands for. Right from the beginning UNMM took care to include members from different ethnic groups and made sure to respect their differences in identity and perspective. Members are required to commit themselves to a peaceful Manipur, they should be secular and not belong to any political party. They agree not to interfere with the autonomy of other member NGOs.

Today there are 38 member organisations, of which 18 are active, and 149 associate organisations working within the network. The district committees, which have been established in all nine districts of the state, are the backbone of UNMM's work. These committees have a democratic structure, each with a convenor at its top. At the central level an executive committee elected by the general body of the network takes care of the general policies. A secretariat implements decisions made by the general body and the executive committee, it facilitates the functioning of the network and manages its activities. Besides this formal structure, an informal core group of leaders from the larger member NGOs who were important in the establishment of the network continues to exist. They belong to different ethnic groups and have developed a high level of trust among each other.

The founding process of UNMM has not been an easy one. It took five years before structures were formalised. Apparently this slow process was necessary to build the close relationships needed for a strong foundation. The ethnic segmentation of Manipuri society had to be overcome internally. Since 2004, the expansion of UNMM to include new members, a redefinition of its role and its relationship to specific providers of funds and the development of internal democracy have been issues discussed within the network.

Since the end of 2001 UNMM has adopted a women's empowerment programme, which led to the creation of a Women's Desk. In 2003 UNMM wrote a pilot study on violence and conflict affecting women in Manipur. Following this and a workshop, UNMM and some of its members adopted a gender policy in order to work against discrimination and for gender equity within its own structures. Today, UNMM has a central women's committee and a women's convenor in each district. Representatives of the women's committee are part of the executive committee. The number of women's organisations in the membership has increased since the new structures have been in place. Though women have been meeting regularly, have developed leadership skills and have made themselves heard within UNMM, traditional patriarchal role models replay themselves within the network's structure and activities. Women are demanding more concern from their male colleagues within UNMM.

In the beginning, talking about peace and conflict was difficult among the UNMM members, as this was a potentially divisive topic. Initially external facilitation was required in order to raise the issue. In spite of differing political visions, today it is "normal" to talk about the conflict situation in Manipur. UNMM itself has become a recognised actor at state level bridging the divides between conflicting groups, in spite of its limited size. It provides a realistic model for cooperation across ethnic and political divisions. UNMM also serves as a network through which leaders of different ethnic communities, even those of the conflicting parties in conflict can be contacted in situations of crisis. Through this, tension can be reduced with shuttle diplomacy as the UNMM leadership seems to be appreciated and credible within their respective communities.

This was well demonstrated when a member of EED staff was kidnapped in 2003 and UNMM leaders from all communities cooperated effectively for his successful release using the contacts and influence they had in their respective communities as well as their skills in networking, organisation and negotiation.

Informal Sector Service Centre, Nepal

The Informal Sector Service Centre (INSEC) was founded in 1988 and started with awareness-building and literacy programmes for empowering the cart pushers of Kathmandu Valley coming from remote villages. Since then it has established itself as a human rights association respected by a large segment of Nepal's political and public actors. INSEC's main areas of intervention are human rights education, campaigning for disadvantaged groups, human rights monitoring and advocacy, conflict transformation and peace-building through people's empowerment and advocacy for the protection and promotion of human rights and social justice in the country.

Among INSEC's first important interventions was a research about the bonded labour situation through a study of the Kamaiya System in western Nepal in 1991. It was actively engaged in the efforts to abolish this system through various activities such as awareness-building, organisation-building at the grassroots level, and education for the kamaiya children. Vocational training, research studies, and lobbying to free the kamaiyas were other areas covered. In a bid to make the government responsible for abolishing the bonded labour system, it went to the court with a writ petition, built international solidarity to supplement the local efforts and submitted a draft act for legislation.

INSEC sustained its presence in public through the publication of a yearbook on human rights, which has become the main source for any discussion about this topic in Nepal. In the pre-emergency days of the Maoist-waged insurgency, INSEC appealed to the government that the conflict should be settled in a peaceful manner through dialogue. It has also volunteered in facilitating the hand-over of kidnapped persons. It regularly monitors the human rights situation under the emergency rule. It has been organising peace rallies and seminars condemning inhumane actions by both the army as well as the rebels. It has filed petitions to make the concerned parties follow necessary humanitarian codes in the present conflict situation.

INSEC has access to both conflicting parties through personal contacts at high levels as well as through relationships developed during practical work. It is able to work in Maoist controlled areas without official "registration" with the local "people's government", usually involving the payment of taxes levied by the Maoists. This has encouraged other NGOs to resume their development-related activities in these districts.

Since 2002, INSEC has been involved in a model project on peace-building, first in Bardiya and Surkhet districts, since 2003 in Banke district – all three in the mid-western region – and since 2004 in Kanchanpur and Doti districts in the western region of Nepal. In Surkhet and Bardiya districts 16 village development committees have been reached, in Banke 6 village development committees, in Kanchanpur and Doti the work with 8 village development committees is under way.

Approaches, Interventions and Challenges

This section looks at what practitioners in conflict transformation can learn from their colleagues in South Asia. It intends to contribute to our current knowledge about conflict transformation processes. Although in the past 15 years a lot has been published in this field, we are still at the beginning of our understanding.

The following chapter presents examples of interventions that sometimes throw a new, surprising light on issues that have been discussed in recent years. They also challenge some of the assumptions fondly repeated by theoreticians who are looking at conflict transformation mainly through the lenses of a European bias. In the end, it is practice that is to show us the way, and not theory.

Most of the following text relates examples from different South Asian contexts to illustrate a specific issue. Some are focussed on one example of an intervention. Stories of success are included, as well as instructive failures or challenges that EED's partners are facing, or the partnership of EED and its partners.

> Unarmed presence and protective accompaniment are nonviolent means to deter violence against agents of transformation.

In order not to repeat specific experiences too often, cross-references have been included in some places. In other places, original voices have been quoted to illustrate the findings. The author hopes that this will contribute to a fruitful discussion of experiences with conflict transformation.

De-escalating Violence and Improving Human Security

The escalation of violence is the most striking feature of social and political conflict. Often, a conflict only catches the attention of the national or international public once infrastructure or private property is destroyed, when lives among the combatants or the populations in a conflict zone are lost. As a consequence, conflict is often perceived as an equivalent to violence.

Direct physical violence is used in conflicts at different levels of their escalation and for different purposes. Often the more powerful conflicting party uses it to enforce its will on the other party. On the other hand, the less powerful actor in a conflict often chooses to adopt violence in order to

be heard, in order to bring attention to his or her cause, to place the issue on the agenda of public debate. In these views, violence works to help the parties achieve their objectives – for some time at least. However, in all those cases violence dehumanises victim and perpetrator, sometimes with purpose. Lives and material are lost in the course of the confrontation, futures are destroyed and suffering is inflicted on whole populations. The structures that personal violence generates are violent structures and the complexity of the conflict increases. A conflict that once may have been manageable moves beyond the resolution capacities of those directly involved.

When this stage of a crisis is reached, concerned outsiders often appeal to two alternatives, depending on their own experience and influence: either they call for robust, often military interventions from outside or they suggest a visible presence by unarmed civilian observers. Their intention is to reduce the level of violence and to separate the warring factions in order to eventually move the conflict back to a level of escalation that permits dialogue. Among the non-violent approaches, the experience of Peace Brigades International in Latin America, in the Balkans, in Sri Lanka or Indonesia shows that unarmed accompaniment by well trained internationals can deter violence and protect those who may be able to build bridges and address the conflict.

Nonviolent presence in war zones by local activists can protect and empower local populations.

Earlier experiences in South Asia – like Vinoba Bhave's Shanti Sena (Peace Army) in India – suggest that this role can also be played by internal actors. However, their contribution has rarely been reflected. INSEC's experience in the Bardiya, Surkhet and Banke districts of Nepal is an important contribution to our understanding of de-escalation efforts by local actors in a conflict. It contains important learning for local actors working in other war contexts and it challenges the assumption that intervention from outside usually would have to take the lead in highly escalated situations.

INSEC's peace-building project started during a period of ceasefire in Nepal's civil war in an area severely affected by the war. It wanted to minimise the negative effects of the war on the population, empower communities to raise their voice in order to develop a people's agenda for peace that would include elements of reconstruction, good governance and community development. When the ceasefire broke down and hostilities were resumed, INSEC continued these activities in a limited way by organising the villagers into local groups that would be educated on their rights and

Escalation of Conflicts:

1 Driving Mechanisms of Escalation

Snowballing of contentious issues

More and more issues are thrown into the disagreement; infection of issues.

And simultaneously: Increasing simplification

> **In taking up the opposing party's issues**
> **("X clearly cares about one thing only").**

2 Driving Mechanisms of Escalation

Widening of the arena

More and more people are drawn into the argument; the circle of involvement is extended; the interests of many people/groups are collectivized and mixed up.

And simultaneously: Increasing personification

> **("X is the cause of all evil", "Get rid of X!").**

3 Driving Mechanisms of Escalation

Pessimistic anticipation

I am prepared for the worst possible scenario ("Things are always worse than you think!").

And simultaneously: Self-fulfilling prophecy

> **Through my actions I create the situation I wanted to avoid.**

(according to: Friedrich Glasl: Confronting conflict. A first-aid kit for handling conflict. Stroud, Gloucestershire: Hawthorn Press 1999, p.74).

empowered to address both conflicting parties with their concerns. At the same time the conflicting parties were requested not to continue the destruction of vital infrastructure like dispensaries, water supplies or schools. The reconstruction of such infrastructure already demolished was undertaken.

Usually the intervention in a region started by trust-building with the local actors of the conflict parties in order to create an environment permitting the INSEC activists to move freely and to work with the population. Likewise, the villagers themselves through listening to their concerns needed to be encouraged to open up and be ready to come together. Then the most affected victims of the civil war were organised in groups of villagers, women, children, elders and traditional leaders. These were empowered by the dispensing of knowledge on their basic rights and given the necessary confidence to demand both conflicting parties to respect the principles of human rights and humanitarian law as well as to help them satisfy their basic needs. These groups in some cases also organised community activities such as peace rallies for the rehabilitation of their rights. In other cases local fora were organised to publicly discuss development priorities with all stakeholders. Infrastructure development projects to provide drinking water facilities, modern toilets, irrigation, local transportation, school support, etc. were organised at the local level. For this purpose, INSEC facilitated access and coordinated efforts with government institutions and development agencies. Pragmatic solutions that would not make the development activity a matter of conflict were aimed at in situations where control of an area is disputed between the conflict parties.

In order to perform these tasks in the Bardiya, Surkhet and Banke districts, from its regional office in Nepalganj INSEC has set up a system of coordinators at district level, facilitators and teachers/trainers wearing blue jackets with "Human Rights Defender" printed on its back in order to increase their visibility and protect them from direct attacks.

The development of these people's campaigns for peace was accompanied by training courses for local stakeholders on human rights and humanitarian laws. Such training courses were finally also demanded by the government security personnel and INSEC responded positively to these requests. Soldiers who had participated in these courses often remained accessible to activists for negotiation.

INSEC took clear positions on issues relating to human rights, but remained non-partisan with regard to the actual confrontation on the ground. Local actors of both sides were reminded to perform according to

their proclaimed objectives. This way INSEC could establish itself as a third party in a highly polarised situation and win the trust of both sides to the extent that these would use INSEC personnel to facilitate negotiation, e.g. about the release of captives. INSEC was able to offer its "good office" in such cases.

Within the project area INSEC was able to empower the people and create a social basis for peace constituencies: communities that would no longer focus on the confrontation as such, but begin to act on important issues and concerns that could improve their conditions. Villagers in the Banke district told the author that with the support of INSEC activists they for the first time dared to speak out. Even in the presence of local Maoist leadership they criticised these for not having fulfilled their promises to implement programmes that would improve their lives. In particular, women also began to participate in village meetings and talk about their concerns. Maintenance of the road to the next market town was important for these rural women who belonged to a marginalised community and lived in a remote area.

> Creating peace constituencies at the grassroots of communities requires credibility, trust, visibility and a backup by actors outside the conflict context.

The conflict researcher and practitioner Friedrich Glasl describes the dynamics of conflict escalation (see diagram on page 59) and points out that the effort to fragment the other party's system is characterised by "bringing about total breakdown of the enemy's system and destroying vital system factors in order to make the system unmanageable". Incidents of that character could well be observed in the civil war in Nepal. INSEC's project activities move the conflict parties back by one or two stages of escalation towards phases of "limited destructive blows" or "strategies of threat", making the conflict a little bit more manageable. Conventional thinking of conflict theory maintains that such achievements are only possible through interventions by external actors. INSEC's experience, however, is a remarkable example that this can also be achieved through the efforts of local actors. In the Nepali conflict context, both parties, were interested in keeping their credibility with the population. Especially the Maoists depended on this. INSEC builds on this. It knows that it is protected because it takes a non-partisan stand, and because of its high degree of visibility in Kathmandu, where it remains in contact with many different actors including the international agencies.

The Nine Levels of Escalation

1

Hardening

Positions sometimes harden and clash

Conviction that tensions can be resolved through talking

Parties and factions not yet entrenched

Cooperation still stronger than com-petitiveness

2

Debate and polemics

Polarisation of thinking, feeling, will

Either/or thinking

Tactics: pretend to argue rationally; verbal violence

Speeches to an "audience": attempts to score points via third parties

Temporary groupings form around certain stances

Discrepancy overtone/under tone

Fighting for dominance

Oscillation between cooperation and com-petitiveness

3

Actions, not words

Strategy of: talking no longer helps – so actions are called for!

Discrepancy between verbal and non-verbal behaviour which dominates

Danger of misinterpreting actions

Pessimistic expectations rooted in suspicion

Pressure for group conformity

Loss of empathy

Competitiveness stronger than cooperation

4

Images and coalitions

Stereotypical images, rumours

Manoeuvring each other into negative roles and fighting these roles

Wooing of supporters

Self-fulfilling prophecy through fixation on images

Covert provocation that is difficult to prove

"Double bind" through paradoxical orders

5

Loss of face

Public and direct personal attacks – moral integrity is lost

Staging of unmasking activities as a ritual

Image: angel-devil

Loss of external perceptiveness

Ideology, values, principles!

Striving for rehabilitation

(according to F.Glasl: Confronting conflict 1999, p.104-105)

6
Strategies of threat

Spiral of threats and counter-threats

Locking in oneself and each other

Manoeuvring oneself into compulsion to act; loss of initiative

Stress increased through ultimatum and counter-ultimatum

Acceleration

7
Limited destructive blows

Thinking revolves only around "inanimate objects"

Human qualities no longer valid

Limited destruction as "appropriate response"; avoidance of counter-blows

Damage considered benefit

8
Actions, not words

Bringing about total breakdown of the enemy system

Destroying vital system factors in order to make system unmanageable

Complete destruction (body, soul, spirit)

9
Together into the abyss

No way back, total confrontation

Destruction of the enemy even at the price of self-destruction (including enjoyment of self-destruction)

There are, of course, limitations to the effectiveness of the project. With its own capacities and limited financial support, INSEC will not be able to expand these interventions considerably. As an NGO somewhat centralised in Kathmandu, the organisation neither has the social backing of a strong movement nor a clear strategy of movement-building that would create a self-sustaining dynamic around these rather singular experiences.

Part of the problem lies in the genesis of the project being designed in a situation of relative stability during a period of ceasefire. In such a situation it may be an appropriate strategy for peace workers to focus on "peace-building" in order to support the ceasefire. When fighting was resumed, strategies were adapted to the new situation, but not reassessed completely. In a situation of continuing violence and confrontation of conflicting parties, it may be more appropriate to adopt an attitude of active peace making that would focus on creating a de-escalating dynamic beyond singular projects rather than localised peace-building. The lack of adaptive response may have to do with the dependency on donors and the relative inflexibility to adjust projects to rapidly changing situations on the ground.

Instruments for dissuasion:
• Rational argument
• Moral appeal
• Increased cooperation
• Improved human understanding
• Distraction
• Non-offensive policy
• Deterrence

Dissuasion in the context of escalating conflict is defined by Gene Sharp as "the result of acts or processes which induce an opponent not to carry out a contemplated hostile action. Rational argument, moral appeal, increased cooperation, improved human understanding, distraction, adoption of non-offensive policy and deterrence may all be used to achieve dissuasion." (quoted according to Mahony).

The presence of the organisation through its human rights teachers, project facilitators and occasional visits of the district coordinator is of great importance for the empowerment and the feeling of security of the population. Conflict parties experience this presence, their rational argumentation and their moral appeal to shared values as a discouragement from using violence. This gives the local groups a confidence boost and the feeling of being protected from outside. The weight of an organisation that seems less suppressible than others in the Nepalese context is of importance in this regard.

Improved human understanding and consequent shared action is the dissuading factor that UNMM's leadership can build on in the north-eastern Indian state of Manipur. Here a grassroots and middle range leader-

ship demonstrates that cooperation and trust are possible beyond ethnic lines, even when militant groups of their own ethnic backgrounds engage in fighting. UNMM derives its credibility from uniting different ethnic representatives in their leadership as well as among their members, from their professionalism that all groups benefit from and from their non-partisan stand on the conflict issues UNMM as a NGO network was able to develop this credibility. Churches in Manipur have a great influence in society but are organised along ethnic lines. They have been encouraged and challenged by UNMM to take up a similar role and are taking up some activities on a small scale, such as pulpit exchange. UNMM leaders have contributed to de-escalation of conflict by dissuading leaders who belong to conflict parties from taking up violent revenge strategies.

Another organisation in the north of India, the Institute for Social Democracy (ISD), builds on improving human understanding. When immediately after the end of a training course on "composite heritage" (see page 80) in July 2005 a terrorist group – probably an outfit fighting for the separation of the northern state of Kashmir from India – committed a bomb attack in the symbolic town of Ayodhya, politicians began to exploit the event for their own purposes and the Hindu right made statements that could have incited violence against the Muslim minority. Participants from the ISD workshop contacted each other and the ISD office on the same day and began to develop strategies how to use their reflection on the composite heritage to counter the feeling of insecurity and tension at the local level. They appealed to a history of shared culture and traditions. It can be assumed that just their becoming active locally, their known in-volvement in a larger network interested in communal issues was well observed by those who in the past had used communal tension for the advancement of their own interests This might have dissuaded them.

It is difficult to tell how successful the de-escalation strategies in the cases narrated above have been, because success in this case means the absence of violence. Whereas violent incidents can be observed, reported and measured, the prevention of violence is a non-event. So far, no indicators have been developed to measure the impact of the activities.

Analysing Conflict

One of the preconditions for conflict transformation, it is assumed, is a profound analysis of the definition of the conflict issues, the identification of actors, a description of the character of their relationships, looking at their attitudes and the whole set of motivations including interests that underlie their positions.

The Manipuri network of development organisations, UNMM, has for a long time had difficulties in reaching common understanding of the issues that the people of Manipur are facing: Is the conflict to be described as an ethnic conflict or as an "ethnicised" conflict with root causes other than ethnicity? Is it about the integrity of the state of Manipur or about nation-building? Is it a political conflict or one that is mainly to be described as between different armed groups? What role does religion play? How are women concerned about the conflict? Is it mainly a conflict about the distribution of or access to natural resources? Whatever focus was adopted, its framing showed the allegiance of its author. In the beginning even the words "conflict" or "peace" were too hot to be discussed.

> Refraining from analysing and defining the conflict situation for UNMM initially was a source of strength as its members could focus on activities that would create trust within the network.

UNMM leadership for some time refrained from defining the conflict which is the background to its activities. Their primary concern was initially to create trust and internal cohesion before touching on the sensitive, potentially dividing issues. Their ability to integrate different perspectives and interests into one network by putting aside the debate over sensitive topics proved to be so successful that UNMM developed into an actor that now could play a more proactive role in transforming conflict: it had gained sufficient credibility to reach out to all sides. At this point, UNMM discovered that analysing conflict would be a necessary step before effective action: an analysis shared among its leaders as well as shared within the membership in the districts.

For them, conflict analysis does not mean a systematic, scientifically consistent approach to understanding the larger realities around, but an effort to make sense, to open up debate, to visualise different perspectives and discover provisional attempts to address aspects of the disempowering realities around them. These views can be developed today and questioned again tomorrow. They reflect the state of understanding that actors from below have at a specific point of time. They do not try to search for eternal truths, but aim at acting out temporary "truths" – an understanding of the conflict reality that empowers for transformative action. This way of looking at social realities is new in South Asia, gaining ground and empowering a whole younger generation of peace builders.

In another case, that of HTNF in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, different members of the network adopt different analytical positions – and this dramatically determines the assessment of HTNF's role in peace processes and conflict transformation. Primarily, HTNF is a network of development

organisations and functions as such. It is a relatively young structure, being established and working under adverse conditions. Peace and conflict transformation have not directly been the focus of its regular activities.

Assessing the impact that HTNF and its members have on peace and conflict transformation largely depends on what analytical perspective is taken on the situation in CHT. Officially, CHT is in a post-settlement phase of conflict transformation. This demands measures to assure the implementation of the peace agreement, rebuilding community, reconciliation as well as building of institutions capable of dealing with conflicts on an ongoing basis (see diagram by Diana Francis on page 69). The individual provisions of the peace agreement outline the way that these tasks were supposed to be taken up.

At the same time, a fundamentally different stand can be taken when analysing CHT as being in a phase of pre-confrontation or preparation of open conflict. As the political leadership and the state of Bangladesh seem to be unable to implement the peace accord in form and content, this is an equally strong perception among HTNF members. HTNF leadership suggests that a new approach to the achievements of struggle and negotiation needs to be taken.

This ambiguity of analysis can be felt when discussing with HTNF members and its leadership about their understanding of "peace". Whereas they see a lot of their activities as being in the framework and in the aftermath of the 1997 peace accord, they define "peace" primarily in terms of relating to ending discrimination and unjust policies as well as guarantees of basic human rights. These aspects of peace – as compared to those relating to absence of poverty or good governance – point more in the direction of unsatisfied demands and an analysis of oppression.

In this line, HTNF's concrete and practical contributions to conflict transformation currently lie in the following areas:

1. Building civil society among indigenous communities and the CHT people as a whole through capacity development of its member NGOs, through providing a forum of sharing and exchange, through practicing democracy in a largely undemocratic external context.

2. Leading a critical debate on development policies and paradigms adapted to the specific context of indigenous communities in CHT and developing a watchdog function towards external approaches to development.

3. Providing training activities on human rights, good governance and civic education aiming at building a democratic society in the CHT.

These are constructive interventions in a post-agreement phase assuming the most favourable scenario that eventually civil society development will increase the chances of implementation of the main provisions of the peace accord or at least satisfy the interests and needs of the population that led to the conflict in the first place. This, however, is a rather improbable scenario because it involves changes in the wider Bangladeshi context in the direction of democratising society and controlling the powerful Bengali vested interests in the CHT. The implementation of the peace accord would require a large number of legal changes that have to be passed by parliament, where these interests seem to have a better lobby than the CHT people.

HTNF's current activities will therefore probably not prevent a new round of escalated conflict in the CHT. Their activities could even be interpreted as pacification of a situation without dealing with fundamental and just concerns according to internationally accepted standards and norms. Against this background, political leaders and lawyers of the CHT people point to international agreements guaranteeing human rights, recognising the rights of indigenous communities, defining indigenous knowledge as traditional and scientific, acknowledging the existence of different life styles and property concepts.

> Constructive interventions relating to the post-agreement phase of conflict transformation may look like pacification when the fundamental principles of the agreement are not implemented.

State agencies seem to behave as if they are still in a situation of counterinsurgency and confrontation. This is not only true regarding the nature and scope of military presence in the region. The earlier policy to co-opt indigenous leadership and intelligentsia into the mainstream system by material and political incentives – without substantive concessions on the major demands of the hill people – seems to be still in place as the unofficial paradigm guiding decisions.

In this context, the development activities undertaken by NGOs with the support and encouragement of external donors can be seen as another way of co-opting local intelligentsia and making them accept the present status quo. Referring to the peace accord then becomes mere lip service without further relevance. In practice, by their non-implementation of the accord, state agencies agree on continuing this situation, as do local NGO leadership by their collaboration. Attempts by NGOs to rebuild institutions of a democratic society in a post-agreement phase then may be seen – and are seen by some of the PCJSS leaders – as veiling the harsh realities on the ground.

Stages and Processes in Conflict Transformation   According to Diana Francis

Unequal power

Shifting power relations

Hidden or latent conflict:
Oppression
Exclusion

Awareness
raising
Conscientisation

Mobilisation:
Group formation,
Empowerment
for action, Analysis,
Strategy,
Building support

Conflict resolution

Negotiation
(with/without
mediation)

Preparing for
dialogue / talks

Open Conflict:
Nonviolent
direct action –
confrontation

Shifting power relations

Settlement

Modification of
stereotypes
Processing the past

Reconciliation
(Resolution)

Peace-building:
Rebuilding community,
Reconstruction/Development,
Democracy/Political participation

Conflict/ Violence Prevention
Constant process of peace
maintenance, constructive
conflict management

Establishing/maintaining healthy power relations

Compare: Diana Francis. People, Peace and Power: Conflict Transformation in Action.
London 2002, pp. 49ff.

Some of the HTNF leaders identify their own problems in the following fields: an indigenous-led NGO per se is no guarantee that it adopts development approaches different from national NGOs; there is a lack of conflict analysis and strategic understanding among the member NGOs; national and international donors in collaboration with local NGOs realise projects in contradiction with the peace accord.

In view of the precarious employment situation and the prevalent discrimination, educated people perceive NGOs as a job market. Indigenous NGOs are often donor driven and depend on the acceptance of their proposals by donors. These usually have their own mechanisms and little opportunity to critically assess their approaches due to the remoteness of the CHT and the limitations to access to this area. Representatives of local NGOs often have difficulties in pointing out what makes their own work different from that of national NGOs.

> Local NGOs, international and national donors realise projects that contradict the peace accord and do not reflect the interests of the indigenous people.

This needs to be reflected further within the HTNF member organisations. A lack of conflict analysis and strategic thinking among the activists in local NGOs result in the feeling of powerlessness. They do not see themselves as actors who make responsible decisions influencing the conflict situation. This pattern of perception is typical for highly escalated social and political conflicts with a high power imbalance: these situations tend to narrow down perceptions to an oppressor-victim dynamic. A constructive intervention could be the development of capacities to obtain a more detailed analysis of the complexity of the situation, including an understanding of own responsibilities in order to permit the weaker party to leave the victim's role.

Policies of bilateral and multilateral donors do not always follow internationally accepted standards and often lack an understanding of the conflict situation. Their partners, who are often approached through the government of Bangladesh, are found to be not sufficiently equipped to influence decisions. Most remarkable examples are large-scale development programmes implemented on a CHT-wide scale that HTNF members participate in as implementing agencies. These programmes are often not geared towards the needs of the local communities and often even provide incentives to settlers to stay in the region, contradicting principles stipulated in the peace accord. This leads to frustration among the local population about the implementation of the peace accord and the commitment of national and international actors to its words and spirit.

What are alternative scenarios and where are access points that allow for different approaches? Within HTNF – besides a few of their politically aware leaders – the only institutionalised body that actively takes on a per-spective of a pre-confrontation phase of conflict is the Women's Resource Network. This has to do with the specific role of women in war in CHT. Women in CHT have experienced that their issues are generally considered second priority to larger "and more impor-tant" issues of justice and liberation. At the same time, the low-intensity war in CHT has a different impact on them than on male society. Harassment, rape and sexua-lised violence continue as a practice and as a system: the cases documented by women's groups are not just individual criminal cases, but symptoms of unequal gender relations carried to extremes in an atmosphere of impunity. This creates a situation of insecurity restricting the free movement of women in CHT. Women in CHT do not find them-selves in a situation of post-settlement, but rather in a situation of oppres-sion and war, and they are beginning to organise themselves and strategise appropriate approaches.

> Women due to unequal gender relations experience the effects of continuing low intensity war much more strongly than men and there-fore interpret the situation as one of pre-confrontation.

Currently, the Women's Resource Network is in the phase of constituting itself. When it addresses these issues in cooperation with its member women's organisations, the network exposes the situation in CHT as a protracted low-intensity war context. This contains the option of moving on to concrete action and thus overcoming the feeling of powerlessness inherent in the present attitude of victimising oneself.

This approach needs support from both the present leadership of HTNF as well as from outside the region. Examples from women's movements in areas of war – through exposure, networking or training – could help to enhance the creativity of those women who are involved in the Women's Resource Network. It can be expected that this work ideally would also transform the local organisations in CHT themselves as it would create a new paradigm that is much closer to the present grievances in the region.

Developing Strategies for Intervention

Youhanabad is a lower middle class residential area at the outskirts of Lahore about twenty kilometres away from the town centre. This is the neighbourhood with the largest resident population of Christians in Lahore,

and probably in the whole of Pakistan. The area is also inhabited by Muslims who are in the majority in all the surrounding neighbourhoods. During communal tensions in Lahore the situation here in Youhanabad threatens to degenerate quickly. People from surrounding areas are easily mobilised to attack Youhanabad.

Youhanabad is one of the intervention areas of CATHE Foundation's solid waste project, a project around waste recycling, combining ecological and health aspects. Human Friends Organisation also has its field office here. Both member organisations of the HAC Alliance therefore form part of a larger coalition of grassroots groups providing leadership in the region.

In one of the cases of blasphemy accusations in Lahore in 2002, a young man in Youhanabad was accused of having desecrated the Quran and insulted the Prophet. A faked letter with his name was found in front of a mosque nearby. Later it was revealed that the issue was brought up by somebody who wanted to harm this man in order to himself be able to marry his wife. Although the facts were later clarified and the true culprit caught, the young man had already lost his job, had to leave the neighbourhood and live in hiding. He still feels persecuted and fears that he might become the victim of someone who wants to "revenge Islam".

This fear is based on real incidents in Pakistan. The blasphemy laws have caused a number of killings, including riots in the town of Shantinagar and the destruction of parts of it based on false accusations of blasphemy. The legality of punishment on the basis of this law has also served to legitimise self-declared warriors of religion to take justice – as they want to understand it – in their own hands, especially when members of the minority communities are accused. In the case of Christians, quickly a direct link is drawn to US-policies in the Middle East; they are seen as agents of the West and the issue becomes one of more general feelings of justified revolt.

Immideate intervention built on mutual trust within the group, on the respect the population had for its members and on their visibility as prominent community members.

In this specific case, Christian and Muslim leaders of the area immediately came out to deal with the tensions. Besides religious leaders, the group consisted of politicians, elders of the land-owning family, influential persons from public and business life. They looked into the facts and made a public declaration against violence. Then they successfully convinced the imams of the relevant mosques in the area to stop further

spreading of accusations and stirring up of emotions. But much damage had already been done. The accused was sought by the police. About 1,500 armed people were prepared to attack. Riots were imminent and first acts of violence were reported. The local leaders spent days in talking to the population and stopping further violence. What helped them much in this work was the mutual trust they had among each other and their own respect and visibility in the community.

Forming a group of activists creates sustainability of the peace intervention.

After this experience, these local leaders formed a peace committee. Most of its members meet regularly in everyday life anyway. In situations of crisis, however, they can easily pull the group together and build strategies based on their experience. This was shown when tensions rose after the US attack on Iraq. Political developments like this that have nothing to do with the situation in the community immediately create local tension and fear. Awareness and early action in this case helped to diffuse the tension and keep the area calm. When communal tension rose high in Pakistan in the beginning of 2006 around cartoons perceived as insulting to Muslims, Christians were targeted. Youhanabad only narrowly escaped the fate of other communities in the country and demonstrated the need for similar preventive action at other localities.

Youhanabad and its surrounding neighbourhoods will remain a "hot spot" for as long as communal policies have a high mobilising power and therefore will be used by interested actors. Although this does not address the root causes of the conflict, action to prevent the spreading of violence is an immediate need in such a situation. Human Friends Organisation and HAC Alliance are part of the local actors. Several of their members live in the area and are well known. They easily can build on these effective, but more spontaneous efforts in order to develop a long-term strategy as HFO through its office has the advantage and the ability to provide a permanent presence. Relationships that are developed in situations of crisis can be used for longer term trust-building. The combination with development work and economically relevant capacity-building programmes contributes to creating credibility.

Within HAC Alliance, competences are available that can be used for local awareness-raising and building of peace constituencies. Besides interreligious prayer services and shared festivals Awaz-e-Niswan offers its theatre group to generate a wider discussion on mechanisms of violence, its forms, causes and means of escalation. One of the plays begins with a

simulation of the Basant (Spring) festival where kite flying traditionally is done by all communities together, one of the occasions of shared happiness, a common heritage beyond religious boundaries. Then this relaxed atmosphere is destroyed by incidences of violence causing suffering, all taking different forms. Everyday violence against women and the impunity in these cases is the basic pattern that repeats itself in wider society where religious and ethnic communities, political parties and other stakeholders of economic power use violence in order to settle their disputes and force their interests on others. This theatre play is shocking and revealing as it shows how the social fabric is destroyed. It includes the audience: everybody is not only a victim, but responsible and therefore can take action in his/her context.

> Coalitions with organisations having different competences help to build peace constituencies at the grass roots.

In another quarter of Lahore, Model Town, Awaz-e-Niswan organises women, especially single mothers, around literacy and capacity-building programmes. The classes also serve as an opportunity to share experience and discuss issues of social relevance. Thus women leave their households, which traditionally are the reference points of their lives, begin to talk about their issues, develop mutual trust across the religious divide and slowly become actors in society. Mistrust is high, especially where communities are disunited along religious lines and it is difficult to initially move women to name the issues. These women explain how they are organising in order to inform each other and the public as soon as they feel that tension builds up in their neighbourhood.

The literacy and capacity-building programmes provide the entry point to the women's sphere in the community. It would be difficult to organise these women just around issues of peace because their concerns are much more practice oriented and "talking about peace" would in their view not sufficiently justify their absence from home. Their role in community peace processes however, could be an important one as they are usually around when tension rises and – if sufficiently aware – could provide an early warning. Usually women have their own vested interest in stability in their communities as they are themselves victimised by violence when it occurs.

Schoolchildren are another target group that HAC member organisations have been working with and that are open to awareness raising on communal issues. HAC so far was able to reach a high level of involvement

in peace programmes with schools run by Christian institutions. These are experiences that HAC Alliance can actively build on in its communal harmony project.

In order to counter communal violence against minorities in Pakistan another step is networking beyond local communities. All three HAC members have a good relationship with their churches, but decided to remain secular organisations in order to be able to reach out to the Muslim majority in their community programmes and in order not to be too dependent on churches, especially when it comes to gender issues. They are also part of different national or provincial networks like the Mubariza Gender Network, which organises training workshops to build awareness on gender issues, publishes on discriminatory laws and does media work on gender themes.

Moving beyond the local community by awareness raising, publicity, networking provides a basis for addressing structural and cultural violence.

Since the beginning of 2005, HAC Alliance has initiated a District Harmony Committee that meets about twice a month. Its members are medium-level representatives of religious communities, people from public life and journalists. Although the situation of religious minorities and communal harmony are at the focus of this committee, including members from the public sphere has been a conscious strategy in order to broaden the impact. This committee intends to lobby for the rights of religious minorities. The Hindu representative in the committee discusses the community's problem to get a permit for the creation of a traditional cremation ground for Hindus or to renovate an old temple in Lahore and open it for religious functions. The members of the committee begin to learn to think and to talk about the problems of the other communities as their own problems. Instead of fighting separately for rights, here they develop a common platform that does not exist elsewhere.

The medium range leadership needs to be encouraged to take position, to meet and develop mutual understanding in order to be able to speak out against violence.

The committee members still differ widely in their ability to represent their community which is a fundamental problem of religious dialogue processes. While the representatives of the Bahai faith have a mandate to talk for their well-organised and relatively small community, the mandate of the

representatives of Christian churches is limited due to the church hierarchies. Different Christian denominations do not necessarily speak with one voice. Muslim leaders, even if influential, cannot refer to any organisational structure that would permit them to speak for the community as a whole. Therefore, the committee so far remains at the level of trust-building and sharing, but does not have any decision-making power. The value and strength lies in the collective creativity, influence and contacts of its members, in setting an example of relating to each other across divides in a common space. These are important assets in times of increasing confrontation and lack of paradigms of coexistence. The Lahore District Harmony Committee is able to reach out to decision-makers on a higher level. This includes, for example, the government Minister for minority issues or the Imam of the Lahore Central Mosque who also happens to be the chairman of the association of imams in Pakistan and has high prestige as somebody who has spoken out against intolerance in the past.

Another working area is awareness-raising of media representatives. HAC Alliance has organised workshops with journalists on communal issues. Incitement to hatred and general misconceptions about religious communities are spread, especially by the Urdu language print media. Journalists are rarely sensitive to the effects that communalist reporting may have on minorities. Statements that might disturb coexistence between religious communities are printed. Religious identity is referred to as one of the first elements by which people are characterised if they belong to any minority. Involving journalists in strategies that prevent escalation, as HAC Alliance is doing, seems to be a task as important as bringing positive examples of tolerance, shared heritage and peaceful coexistence into the media.

The Youhanabad case is an interesting example of intervention in local conflict by local actors. Community leaders who know and trust each other, who are visible and credible in their community bridge religious differences in the interest of preventing the degeneration of a tense situation into violence and destruction. Through these efforts they stop and contain violence that has erupted. They establish truth and unveil rumours; they discourage playing with emotions and influence potential populist voices to refrain from putting oil into the fire. This is a classic peace-making approach based on civilian intervention. Especially in a situation where the state is unable or, because of bias, reluctant to intervene in a conflict by administrative or armed force, this sort of intervention may be the only possible effective way.

Typically, the actors who have been effective in short-term peace-making have to be supported by others who involve themselves in longer term intervention. In the case of Youhanabad this has been the younger generation of activists organised in development initiatives like HFO. Their work is to consolidate peaceful relationships and to create an environment which deters the escalation of tensions that may lead to violence. This is typical for peace-building.
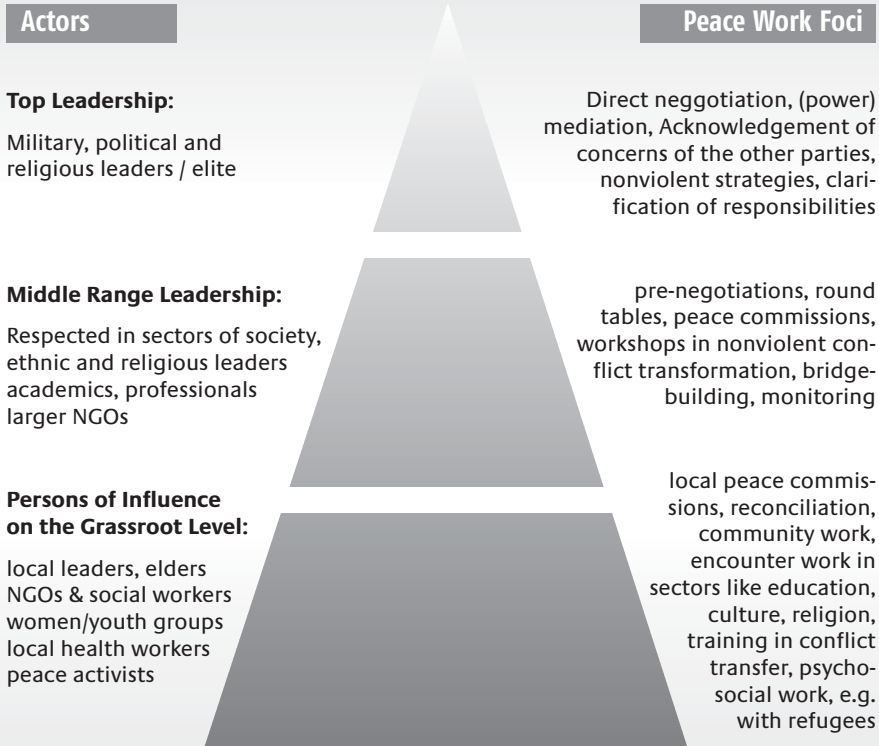
Youhanabad is also an example where strategies are consciously being built over three levels of leadership (see John Paul Lederach's levels of leadership in society, page 78). At the grassroots level the following actions were observed: quick intervention to de-escalate, awareness raising through workshops and events, local peace committees, concrete development activities that implicate all segments of society, relief activities. At the level of medium range leadership in Lahore, a district harmony committee is established, some leaders were invited for public functions and a relationship was established to the imam of the main mosque as well as to church leaders. Awareness training for media personnel was organised. The top leadership, i.e. the political decision-makers, is addressed through the minister for minorities.

The medium range leadership serves as a transmission mechanism between the grassroots demand and perceptions and the top leadership. It is remarkable how effectively members of a small minority were able to establish visibility for a problem that otherwise would not receive much public attention. They were able to recognise local efforts and identify their own place within the field of actors. They drew conclusions from the specific case for dealing with a larger issue and beginning to address it.

Minority rights work seems to be very much at its beginning in Pakistan. Much of the declarations made during meetings, conferences and public events remain at the level of value-building and pronouncement of good will. This demonstrates the amount of work that needs to be done. It seems that lack of information and insensitivity for minority issues is so common that already the recognition of fundamental rights – though guaranteed by constitution – is already one step ahead. Public acceptance for acts of violence, discriminatory behaviour and institutionalised intolerance is supported by legislation that denies equal rights. This sets paradigms for society that are copied at all levels down into intimate relationships in individual households.

Therefore meeting each other, then sharing positive experiences, such as celebrating festivals together and discussing values of tolerance in different

Levels of Conflict and Transformation

Actors

Top Leadership:

Military, political and
religious leaders / elite

Middle Range Leadership:

Respected in sectors of society,
ethnic and religious leaders
academics, professionals
larger NGOs

**Persons of Influence
on the Grassroot Level:**

local leaders, elders
NGOs & social workers
women/youth groups
local health workers
peace activists

Peace Work Foci

Direct neggotiation, (power)
mediation, Acknowledgement of
concerns of the other parties,
nonviolent strategies, clari-
fication of responsibilities

pre-negotiations, round
tables, peace commissions,
workshops in nonviolent con-
flict transformation, bridge-
building, monitoring

local peace commis-
sions, reconciliation,
community work,
encounter work in
sectors like education,
culture, religion,
training in conflict
transfer, psycho-
social work, e.g.
with refugees

Comp. N. Ropers, Friedensentwicklung u. Konfliktbearbeitung, Eschborn 2002, p. 42,
based on J. P. Lederach, Building Peace, Sustainable Development ..., Washington D.
C., 1997, p. 39.

religions, prepares an ideological and experiential ground for addressing the deeper underlying issues. It seems that in Pakistan, the social base for changes towards an open pluralistic society has been decreasing. Moreover the diplomatic space for activists is very limited in an atmosphere where positions and interests are legitimised by either the use of power and violence or by referring to higher values that do not leave scope for debate. Activists cannot dare to confront political and social power at the moment, even if this is unjust. The risk of losing is very high. Peace constituencies begin to come into existence by preparing the ground at the level of shared human values through constructive activities like harmony committees. In the long run it will not be sufficient to develop a mutual understanding. Local NGOs need to think already today where they want to direct their future activities. Eventually structural and legal changes have to happen to strengthen the rights of minorities and provide security for them. Curbing the rights of minorities can be viewed as a threat to overall democratic societal values. Discrimination may start with minorities, but may further threaten the rights of other parts of population, as can be observed regarding women in Pakistan. In such a scenario of escalation, social conflicts may get more and more out of control and pluralism and democracy will remain elusive hopes for the whole of Pakistani society.

> Medium range leaders are able to establish contacts to top-level decision makers who do not allow grassroots activists to challenge them.

The HAC Alliance in Pakistan and the Institute for Social Democracy in India – to be described in the next chapter – share their focus on developing values, increasing an understanding of shared common histories, shared present problems in grassroots communities across societal divides. Both need to go beyond their work on positive values, the spread of information and goodwill on an ideological level. They have to begin to create structures that can support effective advocacy and lobby work for minority and women's rights in Pakistan or in India. Each community also needs to be encouraged to discuss their own religions' responsibility for violence and discrimination: what are our own biases, where do we legitimise violence, which changes are needed? Addressing these issues will make peace efforts stronger.

Furthermore, coherent strategies need to be defined which describe well the NGO's mandate, role and limits in the conflict transformation process. Perhaps "harmony" does not provide as sufficiently sharp an analytical framework as "conflict transformation". Synergies can be better developed

if strengths and weaknesses of HAC members are described in more concrete terms. If the organisations look into working more complementary in limited areas of intervention, instead of starting parallel approaches in different areas, they might have more impact.

Lack of strategy development, of limiting oneself to clearly defined objectives is a weakness that many organisations in South Asia share. Often activists seem to stand in their own way when they take up any pressing and important issue because of their personal commitment to their own communities, because of the absence of credible state agencies that would take responsibility for the needs of the communities, or for other reasons. Often the division of the justice movements along ideological lines or because of leadership competition becomes an obstacle in creating broad alliances and designing mutually complementary strategies. HAC Alliance in this sense is a positive example as the heads of the member organisations trust each other and do not seem to have to compete over leadership. They experience their own weakness as members of a minority and take up the challenge of being integrated as well as actively integrating into larger efforts of peace-building strategy development.

Clarity on one's own mandate, one's strengths and weaknesses would strengthen the work done by grassroot actors.

Discovering Composite Heritage as a Strategy of Intervention

In this chapter, a new approach developed only recently will be discussed and presented. Indian civilisation over the ages has developed cultivated arts and cultural practices that were influenced and inspired by many different traditions. Although this is true for most cultures in the world, India has been unique in its capacity to absorb and integrate over the ages. Historically, the Indian Subcontinent has rarely – perhaps even never in totality – been a political and administrational unit. Even today, there are seven states that exist on the territory that during large parts of the 19th and 20th century was dominated by British colonialism. However, when comparing the Subcontinent's culture with that of other parts of Asia, like China, the Indonesian/Philippino archipelago or West Asian cultures, one would discover that it is at the same time different from these, but also shows an internal coherence that makes it distinct and perceivable as South Asian.

At the same time, South Asian civilisation is internally differentiated. People at all times adapted their life styles to local climatic and geographi-

cal conditions. There is a history of immigration and invasion, of migration and changing political coalitions that led to intermingling of different lifestyles, cultures, but also to transfers of knowledge and techniques that contributed to local learning and adaptation. Often this exchange in historical times was influenced by power relations. But state structures before colonialism and the emergence of the nation state paradigm never had the all-pervading grip on society that we find in Europe today. Even today, South Asian societies are characterised by much of an attitude of pluralism when it comes to looking at every day life of the population. This favoured many different models of life continuing to exist side by side, with more or less contact to each other.

Therefore Indian cultures today have elements that are fractured, i.e. that separate them from others; and elements that are composite, i.e. that they share with others. Indian social experience is such that it combines both plural and syncretic practices.

Different cultural and religious influences that were received or conceived in India remained perceivably distinct from each other, but entered a dialogue that permitted learning from each other, taking over elements, adapting its forms, without however merging completely into each other. Today they show an interconnectedness that reminds of the similarities that can be observed within one family: whereas each individual member of a family can be recognised as a separate person, each of them would share features that would make him/her recognisably connected to the others and these similarities are not necessarily the same throughout the whole family. Composite heritage does not belong to just one group in society, be it religious, ethnic, caste or gender-related. It belongs to the general people and contributes to the preservation of public spaces that are open, democratic and inclusive.

> Each family member can be recognised as an individual person, but also as a member of his/her family, but features shared among its members are not the same for each person.

The Institute for Social Democracy has chosen the concept of "composite heritage" as an instrument to strengthen the cultural practices, beliefs, places of worship, etc. which are commonly shared across the religious and ethnic divides. Through training of grassroots groups and NGOs in composite heritage, ISD promotes plural democratic values of Indian society, works for the openness and vitality of its traditions and empowers those who are working for peace and conflict transformation.

Advancing globalisation exerted a new pressure on the composite nature of Indian society. Globalisation marginalised and devalued local communities and their life styles, transformed their knowledge into commodities that would be marketable internationally and made them receivers and spectators instead of actors in a development game that they would no longer be able neither to understand nor to influence – though people in Indian communities very clearly see and understand the effects of these developments on them. This provided fertile ground to those who asserted themselves as the self proclaimed protectors of tradition and "identified the culprits" against whom to unify. Local communities were divided on the basis of particular identities where they had been united over centuries and where they had struggled together to develop a sustainable lifestyle. Violence seemingly spontaneous, but in reality orchestrated by those who hoped to get into power on this wave and supported by those who believed that this would be in their own personal interest, began to spread all over India, especially in those states and regions that are most touched by development, large-scale trade and mobility, first of all in its urban centres.

ISD follows a threefold strategy in its efforts for peace and justice, for conflict transformation and violence prevention:

- Bringing together civil society groups and organisations committed to democracy and secularism in a series of meetings and workshops, to explore the dimensions of composite heritage and build commitment to preserve and enrich it.

- Carrying out training and research studies to explore and popularise cultural resources such as literature, folk tales, music and theatre, in order to uncover and defend cultural commonalities and make visible the secular and democratic values underlying shared traditions, including the development of a training handbook.

- Converting the findings and outcomes of the above workshops and studies into simple, easily accessible materials for popular education and public mobilisation, with a particular focus on rural communities.

ISD understands secularism as an attitude that recognises the existence of different collective identities – religious, linguistic, ethnic, etc. – and respects their socio-political and cultural aspirations. It not only respects the space of communities of other backgrounds, but it asserts their right to this space. People of different identities cooperate instead of just living side by side.

Workshops in India's neighbouring countries in South Asia provided new learning opportunities for ISD. From conceptual thinking it is obvious that composite heritage not only refers to experiences within India. Whatever social or geographic framework is chosen, it is possible to discover composite elements of culture. In fact there are values, norms and cultural practices that have become worldwide composite heritage, such as human rights and civil liberties. The division of the South Asian Subcontinent has also become a commonly shared historical experience of all people living in the region. A large section of the composite heritage discovered within India also extends to Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal.

However, when conducting training workshops in Dhaka, Bangladesh, the participants also discovered painfully where there are sensitivities that developed due to experiences of separation and segmentation and due to the use – sometimes: discredit – of cultural concepts by those who are in power. Participants from Pakistan, in fact members of the Christian minority in Pakistan – in a break joined youths outside the training centre who were involved in a volleyball match. When these young Bangladeshis learned that their co-players were from Pakistan they refused to continue to play with them: the perception of the atrocities committed by the Pakistani army against the Bengali independence movement in the early 1970s as well as the use of nationalist sentiments during and after liberation emphasised segmentation in spite of a large range of commonalities and in spite of the protagonists themselves being members of an oppressed minority suffering from various national chauvinisms.

> Elements of culture can connect communities in the form of composite heritage – they can as well separate them when they become cultural violence.

Likewise, the name "India" as one of the names given to the Subcontinent and generally accepted by most communities until the first half of the 20th century, is today linked invariably with the nation state of India and citizens of Bangladesh or Pakistan would feel being insulted when being called Indian. (Perhaps only when becoming part of Diaspora communities, people can still refer to the "common Indian roots" that they have. But also there, families that emigrated long before independence feel compelled to identify themselves as "originally" Indian or Pakistani). Today, in the eyes of many of its inhabitants this is no longer the Indian Subcontinent, but South Asia. And when Indians talk about the "partition" in 1947

as if Pakistan separated from India, Pakistanis feel that this is a distortion of history creating two separate states at the same time: the emergence of new nation states on the South Asian Subcontinent would the more neutral and acceptable terminology. On the other hand, Bangladeshis prefer to talk about their "liberation" from Pakistan instead of separation.

Therefore, experiences from seminars conducted in Bangladesh with participants from Pakistan, Bangladesh and India show:

- The concept of composite heritage is valid in the whole region. It can unite perspectives and it appeals to activists in all three countries.
- Talking about composite heritage uncovers sensitivities and specific perspectives related to historical injuries, injustice and experiences.

Ashish Nandy's Models of Governance in India

1. **The secular state, usually in the form of a nation state model: though being part of the rhetoric of a political elite, this model was discredited from the very beginning of independence through the creation of separate political states, the violence on both sides of the newly erected frontiers, the propaganda nurturing several wars, the acceptance of caste divides in politics and the reverence given to religious leadership and symbols.**

2. **The profession of a secular ideal for the state and at the same time trying to manage ethnic and religious sentiments, at times also exploiting them: this model has been discredited by the increase in violence, the consecutive insecurity and its death toll created by political elites competing for electorates that politics was not able to offer the benefits promised to them.**

3. **A third model recognising and building on the cultural experiences of the vast majority of the Indian population and described by Nandy thus: "… the 'patrimony' in the matter of inter-religious or inter-ethnic understanding is acknowledged, self-consciously or unwittingly. It is assumed that in a participatory democracy, however imperfect, citizens will employ categories and interpretative frames in the public sphere known to them through their heritage, in turn transmitted through religious, community and family traditions." (p.116f)**

In his book "Time Warps" the political scientist Ashis Nandy discusses three models of governance in India:

1. The purely secular state

2. A mixture of the secular state ideal with attempts to manage ethnic and religious sentiments

3. A participatory democracy acknowledging the diversity in heritage of the people.

The work on promoting composite heritage as a tool to prevent violence and transform conflicts feeds into the third attitude towards state. Secular human rights, civil liberties and social justice activists in India for a long time have been influenced by socialist or Marxist thinking and analysis but have neglected the cultural roots that still play an important role for the large majority of the people in India. Culture, tradition and religion were left among others to "Hindutva" forces as their field of action.

> Composite heritage is a dynamic, democratic concept that encourages the expression of cultural values in order to interpret socio-political relationships without endangering the tissue of society.

The training manual on composite heritage shows the process of thinking and exploration. Originally composite heritage was understood as the high arts cultivated by an elite and only consumed by the large majority like poetry, miniature painting, classical music styles and architecture. Indeed, these are found throughout the Subcontinent and were and still are cherished by intellectuals hailing from different religious, ethnic and regional backgrounds. These expressions of culture are uniquely Indian, and they also demonstrate the fertility that openness for influences can generate. As such, the larger part of Indian cultural heritage inherently projects a cross-cultural, trans-community attitude of openness and liveliness that is rare in the world.

When working with community activists however, ISD trainers were confronted with participants from another social stratum of Indian society. Shrines, shared religious sites, feasts and meals, folk songs, elements of daily culture, the general love for Indian film music – all these represent composite heritage as well.

Through ISD's training courses, an informal network of community activists is being developed. The training courses are demanding and challenging to the participants. They challenge them to expose and question

**Examples from the Manual
"Composite Heritage for Peace, Harmony and Democracy":**

Popular religious traditions

There are a number of people in every human community who ask questions related to larger issues like "What is Life? What happens when one dies? What is good and evil?" These spiritual people give their own answers to these questions from time to time. Generally, they have a small following. However, in certain phases of history in the life of a community these issues become critical to the concerns of a very large number of people. It is in these times that popular religious movements emerge. The North Indian Brahminical tradition after the first millennium was characterised by the hierarchical four-caste structure. After the tenth century, very large areas were brought under cultivation. These lands had been reclaimed by the migrant Jat communities. In many areas, the forest dwellers had also taken to agriculture. They had a strong tribal tradition of equality. It was in the backdrop of these newly emerging peasant groups that new religious traditions emerged. Islam with its message of equality came to India during this period. The mutual interaction of the native traditions and Islam produced noble experiments in religion in this period. If we study the preachings of saints like Nanak, Kabir, Raidas, Dadu etc., they have one thing in common. They all emphasise the equality of humans. A study of their teachings shows that they were familiar with the Islamic tradition. Sikhism is the most well known among them. Guru Granth Sahab, the holy book of the Sikhs contains verses composed by well known Muslim saints like Baba Farid. Saints like Kabir are revered by the Hindus as well as the Muslims. The strong emphasis on equality seems to be derived from the Islamic tradition. On the other hand, their conceptions of god and Bhakti were very clearly derived from the traditions originating from the Tamil speaking areas in the sixth and seventh centuries. Thus, these saints represented a unique blending of two anterior traditions. The new peasantry with its strong tribal traditions of equality found the teachings of these saints attractive and they embraced these Gurus.

Kathak

Kathak is the most popular dance form of northern India. The word Kathak is derived from the word katha, or story. It has primarily been a solo performance art. A unique feature of the dance is the relationship each artist develops with the audience through recitation and descriptive commentary. Wandering bards have narrated and performed mythological stories before village audiences in India for a long, long time. Their tales are often taken from the great epics, the Mahabharata and Ramayana, as well as from stories of the Puranas – especially those of Lord Krishna and his exploits in his sacred land of Vrindavan. During the middle ages, the Moguls brought this dance into the court setting. Lavishly costumed and jewelled court dancers entertained kings and noblemen with poetic descriptions as well as technical virtuosity and refined beauty. Kathak is thus a fusion of the aesthetic ideals of both the Hindu and Muslim cultures.

In Wazid Ali Shah's court at Lucknow in the middle of the nineteenth century, Kathak reached its present form. On the one hand, the devotional ideals of the dance were brought to a new realisation with the incorporation of the Krishna Lila (amorous exploits of young Lord Krishna) which could be performed with the accompaniment of the new light-classical vocal form, the thumri. On the other, the exquisite refinement of that court, with its formal dress styles, enhanced the quality of the presentation. As a result, Kathak become a subtle mix of Hindu and Muslim cultures, depicting stories from the original Hindu epics as well as themes from Persian and Urdu poetry.

Food and Dress

Roti, the most popular form of wheat bread consumed by the Indians, is a Turki word. This means that the most popular form of Indian food has its origins in the Turkish tradition. In northern India the most popular breakfast is Jalebi, Kachauri and Alu ki Sabji. Jalebi was brought by the Turks, Kachauri was invented by ancient Indians and Alu or potato was brought from America by the Europeans. Our evenings are incomplete without Halwa, Samosa and a cup of tea. Halwa and Samosa were introduced by the Turks. Tea had been dis-covered by the Chinese. It was the British who introduced tea to India. Paratha, was invented by the Turks in India. Biryani, Kabab and very many non-vege-tarian delicacies were introduced by these settlers. Today, when a smart girl turns out wearing Salwar Shamiz and Dupatta, she represents the commingling of the two traditions. While Salwar and Shamiz are derived from the Turko-Persian traditions Dupatta is derived from the ancient Indian tradition.

common beliefs and ideas. Participants are encouraged to develop their own understanding, they are listened to and taken seriously, instead of provided with answers. They are not taught ideology, but led to open their own eyes, also in the face of their own prejudice, to look for underlying causes of developments in society. Above all – and a rarity in education in South Asia – they are taken as partners and colleagues in a struggle to retain democratic values in society.

Meanwhile, several of the other NGOs presented in this publication have sent their staff for training on composite heritage. They discover that they return with new insights and stronger motivation and values to continue their work.

Developing Local Capacities for Peace

Emphasising the composite heritage of South Asian cultures is a conscious strategy to strengthen those experiences that connect communities against the segmentation of society by the proponents of "pure" cultures or religions. ISD's thinking not only builds on the syncretistic nature of popular culture, their courses try to create awareness for building peace constituencies at the grassroots, within communities. While in earlier times, communal violence mainly took place in urban centres, in recent years rural districts have increasingly been affected. The countryside, however, is also the place where organically grown community between members of different faiths still exists. This approach is reflected by the thinking that each conflict setting creates its own factors that would either be separating or connecting the conflicting groups, a view on conflict that is part of the project to support local capacities for peace.

Local Capacities for Peace (LCP) with the principle of "Do No Harm" has been developed since 1994 by Collaborative for Development Action of Cambridge, USA. It is a tool aiming at helping aid organisations working in areas of war, armed conflict or with high levels of tension. Experiences have shown that often development or humanitarian projects unwillingly contribute to escalating conflict and do not use available mechanisms to decrease the tension. LCP intends to make project designers aware of the factors separating conflict parties (dividers) as well as those factors potentially bringing them together (connectors). It is about "how" a development programme is implemented in a conflict setting.

Several of the trainers belonging to the Diaconical Ministries of the Church of South India participated in "Do No Harm" workshops, discussed the LCP approach with their colleagues and used the insights gained

in order to reorient their work with Dalit communities. They discovered where it was possible to identify connectors and dividers and plan interventions accordingly. As the caste conflicts in Southern Tamil Nadu are not just violent conflicts that need to be de-escalated, but issues around struggles for social justice, the application of LCP thinking sometimes becomes challenging. A tea shop can be both a dividing factor that emphasises caste hierarchies for the involved community or a connecting factor, a small local "success story", a meeting and communication place across caste divides.

Identifying dividers and connectors helped to orient strategic planning in struggle for justice situations, for example to bridge differences between the disadvantaged.

Several of the local institutions have this double function. Temples can be dividing communities when Dalits are prevented from entry. But they are also connecting where Dalits are needed as drum bearers for functions, for example. Religions have been dividing communities. For the Dalit community the legislation on positive discrimination does not consider Christian Dalits eligible to certain benefits, even if they remain being seen as Dalits and nothing in their economic situation changes. School connects as it offers opportunities for advancement, personal careers and individual development. School divides where scholarships are offered to Hindu Dalits on the basis of positive discrimination: it divides them from low castes as well as from Christian Dalits.

Important connectors are the need for water and education as well as the shared poverty of the different communities. Political parties and political movements have been functioning as dividers as they try to expand their constituencies at the expense of the others. Political Hinduism resulted in the assertion of caste identities. So far DM keeps a distance to political parties though some of them, like Communist Party organisations, have been active in similar fields. In Kanyakumari the All India Democratic Women's Alliance, the women's wing of the CP had taken up an inter-caste conflict around a marriage case. Beyond strategic alliances in specific rare cases DM does not move into concrete coalitions with political parties, which is helpful for keeping a clear perspective of the issues at hand and maintaining the role of a peace broker. LCP concepts are used by DM to bridge difficulties among disadvantaged communities, irrespective of their religion or caste. This is coherent with their objective to develop a strong voice for justice in the caste conflicts of the region. It is, however, not an instrument to address the manifold problems that arise when peace

project staff or volunteers commit themselves to addressing a specific conflict situation – here other instruments for analysis and strategy development need to be applied.

In another part of India, Manipur, LCP was introduced much earlier: from 1998 a series of training workshops was held in cooperation with CDA. Since October 2002 UNMM has LCP trainers working directly in the field. To date, 16 trainers have been trained, twelve are still actively involved with the work of UNMM. The network has decided to mainstream LCP and apply its principles through all its development activities. Some of the LCP trainers have had the chance to share their experience with colleagues in East Africa. LCP has not only been applied on activities and structures of UNMM members and associates. Also members of the government administration on district level, of village councils and churches have been trained in LCP.

An evaluation in 2003 showed that LCP has had an impact on the personal life of the network partners and trainers, the NGO movement in Manipur and on the people in Manipur. Participants in the process became aware of the complexity of the conflicts in Manipur and their own involvement as well as responsibility in this situation. The focus of their attention moved away from individual incidents of conflict events to becoming sensitive about structures of conflict. Organisations reoriented their work and redesigned their own structures to adapt to these new insights.

While talking about conflict and peace had been very difficult among the UNMM members at the beginning, this has become a commonly shared concern that is debated among the members as well as with the surrounding world. Initially what was important for those who participated in the training of trainers' programmes was that they were meeting outside their usual framework and were led to discuss issues of concern through the application of a new methodology. It opened perspectives on the conflict that hitherto were not perceived. This enabled them to enter into dialogue with members of other ethnic communities in a non-threatening way. This dialogue continued after the training workshops in the field. Participants began to understand themselves as connectors, redefining their own role in the context of Manipur's conflict constellations.

> Trainees on LCP developed a new perspective on the conflict and began to understand themselves as connectors.

This encouraging experience is repeated now that the LCP trainers are working in the field, sharing their newly acquired vision with target groups and learning how to adapt LCP as a tool to the needs on the ground. However, they are challenged on this way. Identifying factors that contribute to the continuation of war or to the increase of violence in order to remove "dividers", they themselves come into conflict with the war economy. Members or sympathisers of militant groups recognise where their own interests are affected by the critical debate, e.g. about corruption or extortion. This has especially been the case when development projects or local administration recognised how they act against their own long-term interests by feeding resources into the war economy.

An initial response has been to expose people to these issues in a practical way. The opportunity offered itself during the flood of the Brahmaputra River when volunteers were requested to help in the relief work. This was used as a practical example to discuss with them the design of the relief operations along LCP principles. The volunteers learned from this experience and took the learning back to their communities. UNMM then started to work with LCP in those communities, where they are trusted and close contact to the leadership had been established. Even if some of the people were not happy with the issues discussed, they were able to look at and understand the structures of conflict. Many development organisations who had worked in the old style without reflecting their involvement in the conflict ("working around conflict") began to become attracted to LCP and increased their internal analysing capacities. They also understood, e.g. that it would be better not to work with members of only one community in a region populated by different communities. This finally raised interest among other groups in the communities, including among some of the armed groups.

With the increase of experience in using participatory methods the LCP trainers became more and more able to facilitate learning processes where villagers identified their own problems. When the LCP trainers discussed with the effects of successful income generation programmes the villagers, they came to the assessment that more income has led to higher demands from military outfits, feeding more money into the war and eventually increasing the spiral of violence.

On some occasions the courses were renamed as "Local capacities for better programme application" – a title which helped to remove fear as "peace" is a term with difficult connotations in Manipur. It was also decided to work in mixed groups with ethnically mixed teams and wherever

possible with male and female trainers in the same team. A glossary in local languages with terms used in the courses was developed and hand-outs and other materials translated into Meitei language as the common means of communication in the state. This helped to overcome hesitation because of language barriers and encouraged the trainers to begin to con-

> Analysing development interventions with the LCP instruments empowered local actors to move from victimhood to agency.

textualise their training materials. However, it also proved useful to work with case studies from other Asian countries. In a situation where the analysis of the conflict is highly disputed and a shared understanding of the conflict cannot be taken as a point of departure, examples from other contexts are less threatening and allow a more relaxed approach to understanding the mechanisms.

LCP made UNMM aware of the impact of their activities and created a basis of analysis for concrete strategies. For example, in the Thanga region not far from Imphal the presence of militant groups as well as army operations had been an obstacle to development. In order to move away from an attitude as a victim of adverse circumstances, local UNMM members analysed their own contributions to this situation and thus were able to change their policies: new arrangements with armed groups operating in the area were negotiated that would respect development activities. This way, a realistic and pragmatic basis was created for the original vision developed during the Naga-Kuki war to contribute to a peaceful transformation of conflicts in Manipur.

However, translating LCP into action also raised a lot of new questions and problems. For example, it proved difficult to use history as a connector between the communities because history becomes disputed as soon as it is used as an argument to assert one's own positions in the conflict. When one of the communities feels that it is oppressed or discriminated against, its need to assert itself has some legitimacy. In Manipur's recent history, however, most communities have seen themselves in a weak position and as being oppressed by some other actor. Along with history, ethnic difference, language, religion and socio-economic structures have been dividers between the opposing groups. LCP trainers realised that many differences need not be considered harmful to inter-ethnic relationships, but could contribute positively and add value to living together. While target groups often bring out dividers, UNMM and its LCP trainers discuss how a meaningful diversity can be developed in Manipur, which historic experiences are useful for shaping future and which roles NGOs should play in designing this future.

This debate is also carried into the churches. With each ethnic community having their own church structure, churches have often been perceived as dividers and are challenged by the thinking underlying LCP. Also most of the NGOs were organised along ethnic lines. Several have undertaken efforts to become more inclusive through several means, including the diversification of their staff.

> LCP encouraged actors to discover and develop ideas about a meaningful diversity that is respectful of experiences of oppression.

For young people in Manipur, there are little economic and social opportunities. Emotions can be raised easily among them in order to mobilise along conflict lines or recruit them to militant groups. Here, providing concrete livelihood opportunities seem to be the only appropriate response.

LCP offers an opportunity to many participants in the workshops in Manipur to deal with the effects of the conflicts in everyday life. They are able to share their experience and see that they are not alone in the suffering. They discover that there are other options than seeing themselves as victims, share the development of a new focus and of new ways of thinking. For example, several grassroots organisations began to incorporate learning from the LCP processes into work on trauma, gender, globalisation or organisational development.

For the network, the main effect of working with LCP was thus creating perspectives and building skills, developing credibility as a structure capable to address issues in a non-partisan way. UNMM developed analytical and leadership skills and was able to attract other NGOs to join these efforts. UNMM built relationships to actors on many sides of the conflict and is respected as independent.

These experiences with LCP under very difficult circumstances in one of the remotest and least known conflict regions of the world are a learning ground for conflict work that others can profit from. In a mainstreaming process with nine partner organisations from EED in South Asia that was launched in 2004, UNMM is offering experience and services to organisations like DM in Tamil Nadu and to cooperate closely with ISD, who are strengthening a particular set of connectors, 'composite heritage'

Moving from "Working in Conflict" to "Working on Conflict"

In a critique of donor policy in humanitarian assistance Jonathan Goodhand identifies three different approaches to conflict:

> "1. Working around conflict: treating conflict as an impediment or negative externality that is to be avoided.
>
> 2. Working in conflict: recognising the links between programmes and conflict and making attempts to minimise conflict-related risks, so that aid 'does no harm.'
>
> 3. Working on conflict: conscious attempts to design programmes so that they have explicit conflict prevention and peace-building objectives."

These approaches can be found in the work of donors, international humanitarian and development agencies, as well as in the activities of local development organisations. Although the latter are constantly aware of the conflict situation as their life reality, they sometimes chose to neglect its relationship to their own activities out of fear or a perception of powerlessness. UNMM's history in this regard is instructive as it shows how an organisation may be able to change its perspective and accordingly recreate its role several times.

Until approximately 2004 UNMM focussed on development activities, recognising the impact of conflict on development as well as the impact of their projects on the conflict dynamics. Member organisations were sensitised by LCP to include awareness into their project planning: The network has moved from "working around conflict" to "working in conflict". Working with the LCP approach has broken the taboo of not talking about conflict among the UNMM members. The intensive analytical work required to implement Do No Harm strategies in their activities has opened a space to discuss conflict and has helped to begin a process of thinking about a more pro-active role for UNMM in the Manipur conflict scenario, moving towards "work on conflict". This reflection has to be seen as a result of the awareness created by the LCP training programmes, though not an intended one.

The biggest obstacle for strategising around working on conflict has been the lack of a common position in the conflict: UNMM members differ on political visions for Manipur and this mainly along ethnic lines. For example, Manipur's state integrity is a vision that may not be acceptable to

large parts of the hill population. Negotiating state borders or different forms of autonomy are not acceptable to others. The network's members mirror the conflicts existing in society.

Some of UNMM's leaders have been discussing external mediation for the conflict between armed groups and the Indian government, following the example of the ongoing negotiation with armed groups in Nagaland. They discovered however, that asking others to mediate in the conflicts is also done out of hope to overcome their own lack of clarity. Central questions have been what aspirations does UNMM itself have towards the Indian government and who are the main actors to address?

The first steps to work on the conflict issues have been the inclusion of trauma work in the programmes and lobby activities for the installation of a peace commission at state level that would provide NGOs with a state actor to whom they can address concerns. However, UNMM now feels sufficiently strong to move towards a greater role in negotiation. Involving civil society leaders from all communities, having gained experience and received training as well as being credible with all sides of the conflicts are the strengths that UNMM could bring into the project. They are encouraged by seeing that the population is getting tired of the war and peace is talked about by various actors inside and outside the state. The Indian government seems to recognise that the conflict binds valuable resources and cannot be hidden away any longer from the international public. The rising Indian middle class needs resources from the region (energy) for the development of industry and, though the exploitation of resources might be one of the root causes of the conflicts in North-East India, they in fact cannot be interested in a continuation of the war. Fighting a low-intensity war also includes the violation of human rights which is now widely discussed.

All these factors appear to be favourable to beginning a stronger involvement in the conflict and offering UNMM as a network capable of facilitating processes. For this to happen, UNMM leaders need to collectively open up to look at a wider variety of options than those advocated by the militant groups. They have to decide how far they want to or are able to go in siding with the interest of the population and distancing themselves from armed powers. There is unity within UNMM about the rejection of violent means of conflict resolution. This common ground has, however, to be extended to an own vision in the conflict. This does not necessarily mean a position on the contentious issues of integrity, autonomy or segmentation of the state. UNMM could instead develop a stand on process

questions that would lead to constructive transformation of the situation: not defining solutions for the conflict, but propose concrete ways to come to such solutions.

Such process questions could be developed on the basis of an evaluation of past experiences. The NGO community has gathered experience with negotiation, especially in the context of contributing to the release of people who have been kidnapped. The specific role of women in negotiation needs further evaluation and development. Several women's organisations in Manipur have played a major role in peace-building. Their experiences can be built upon. As some villages have not been involved in the fighting taking place around them, these peace experiences need to be considered as valuable learning: what made them not become involved? The work of the review committee on the Armed Forces Special Powers Act could be an example for the demanded state peace commission.

> Positioning oneself in a conflict arena does not necessarily mean proposing options for the resolution of the conflict – a vision may focus entirely on process.

If UNMM decides to move further towards an active facilitating role in the existing conflicts in the state, it would need to strengthen its capacities, especially in the fields of strategy development, negotiation and mediation in order to professionalise its approach. It would have to take care not to move ahead too fast and lose its base among the grassroots NGOs, which are able to provide access to some of the actors and give it legitimacy for its new role.

In the Church of South India the workers in the peace programme of the Diaconical Ministries play a similar role to the UNMM leadership. Traditionally, church development programmes in Tamil Nadu have focussed on humanitarian aspects and rarely raised questions around justice. Indirectly and probably without intending so, DM's programmes were oriented towards everybody in a community. That could be interpreted as undermining the position of marginalised caste groups further. The DM through its peace programme now pushes the church to become more proactive in addressing the injustice underlying violence between different caste groups.

In Gujarat, feminist organisations had a different experience. As such, they were already addressing conflict around patriarchy and gender roles. SAHR WARU's director Sheba George writes, "Across these years of organisational work, we were constantly aware of increasing communalism within the majority community and its influence on the marginalised

Dalit community that not only had its impact on the status of Muslim women within the society but also effected the status of Hindu and Dalit women within their own communities adversely. The fact is that we consciously and sustainedly tried to work on through developing cross religion and caste women's networks, dialoguing with youth and engaging with state and non-state agencies on issue of communalism." SAHR WARU's intervention in the communal conflict was further inspired by the Beijing Platform for Action. A finding from Beijing had been that women are often divided by different forms of identity politics along class, caste or religion and that this is preventing them from standing up for gender equality and justice. SAHR WARU's activists felt much affected by the experience that middle-class and Dalit women were actively participating in the violence in February/March 2002 as persecutors. This moved SAHR WARU much more strongly from an organisation working on women's issues to one taking up the challenge of communalism without compromising the feminist agenda.

> Working on addressing gender conflict moved the organisation to address the communal conflict as structural - personal violence in both conflicts were interconnected.

As early as February 2000 SAHR WARU had collected testimony by Muslim women on issues around gender justice and minority rights. A public hearing was conducted. The immediate contact with survivors of the genocide, assisting them when they had been displaced and working with them throughout the difficult weeks – all this increased the organisation's credibility in the eyes of the survivors and their communities.

SAHR WARU's director Sheba George participated in different fact-finding efforts, for example, as a witness to the Concerned Citizens' Tribunal headed by Justice VR Krishna Iyer and as a co-panellist to the report on violence against women "The Survivors Speak: How has the Gujarat massacre affected minority women?". Her engagement was an important link between the women's experience at the grassroots, including that of her colleagues engaged in concrete activities on the ground, and the wider debate with the political decision-makers. In this way, survivor experience could be translated into political demands for advocacy.

After a first period of dealing with the immediate effects of the genocide, SAHR WARU set out for more long-term programmes. Initially contact was (re)established with women and community leaders in various badly affected areas of Ahmedabad. Then the organisation started doing a

benchmark survey about the status of women. in the quarters of Gomti-pur, Naroda Patiya, Vatva and Bombay Hotel. Once a baseline study was completed in a certain locality, SAHR WARU began to organise groups of women.

Another experience of this kind was made by the Informal Sector Service Centre in Nepal, INSEC demonstrated that in a changing situation it was able to change its role from an organisation working in conflict to one that would directly address conflict.

Credibility gained through human rights work enabled the organisation to change its role and engage more proactively in addressing the violence of the conflict in offering itself as a mediator.

Apparently, being credible as an organisation rooting its activities in values and norms such as human rights (in the case of INSEC individ-ual as well as social rights) – is an advantage in terms of legitimacy, even if the organisation is critical of certain activities of the conflicting parties where they violate these human rights. It has been reported that the human rights yearbook compiled by INSEC has been found among the reading of government security personnel as well as Maoist militants.

Struggle for Justice as an Element of Conflict Transformation

Conflict Transformation is often associated with the de-escalation of vio-lence or tension. The following examples demonstrate that sometimes latent conflicts or conflicts that are not dealt with because of the strong imbalance of power between the parties involved need to be escalated before other transformation processes can take place. Struggles for justice are such situations. Activists in these struggles are in fact often perceived or portrayed as trouble makers, especially by those actors and interest groups that benefit from the current situation. However, by their commit-ment to non-violent methods for addressing issues of injustice and struc-tural violence and their openness to dialogue with the opponent they open up roads to transforming the conflicts inherent in unjust situations.

Many intellectuals in Gujarat who subscribe to secular values including those who had not spoken out against the genocide publicly felt ashamed of the events and were deeply hurt by the experience that this happened. Some felt targeted themselves by their belonging to minority communities or because of speaking out for the human rights of marginalised commu-nities. They did not feel safe in their homes any more and could easily

identify with those who were directly affected by the violence. This was a motivation for the intervention in the communal conflict in Gujarat by SAHR WARU as well as other organisations.

While working on the communal conflict, activists as well as concerned communities are constantly threatened by external influences that are beyond their control. Fear remains a reality existing in the communities surviving the genocide. Events on the macro-level, like a cricket match between India and Pakistan, immediately revive these fears of impending threat to life and existence: in the event of the Indian cricket team losing the match, would revenge be taken on the Muslim population of the town? Beyond such immediate threats, the bigger challenge is the Gujarati political system, which remains unchanged, willing and able to repeat engineering communal violence for its own purposes. In the eyes of the perpetrators, their strategy generally must have been considered successful: different communities were united and rallied behind the Hindu right against the minority communities; impunity for their activities was guaranteed.

> Struggles for justice may escalate conflicts through non-violent methods – nevertheless they are legitimate and necessary steps for the transformation of conflicts.

Without a challenge to this system of impunity, security and an end to the genocide cannot be reestablished. SAHR WARU's directors' involvement in advocacy activities is a step towards this objective. However, the Gujarati intellectual scene seems to be largely divided. The wounds seem to be too deep to permit relevant actors to cooperate openly and with mutual trust. Shame, the feeling of being left alone, disempowerment, disappointment and mutual reproaches, lack of understanding one another and fear create barriers between activists that prevent open sharing and concerted action beyond limited friends' circles. Donor policies and jealousies about access to funds create additional obstacles that make the underlying problems even less accessible. Intellectuals in today's Gujarat still see themselves more as victims of an overpowering situation than as actors who can move things ahead. Donors need to recognise this reality and adjust their policies accordingly.

SAHR WARU's work in this context is important as it can provide an experience showing that women's grassroots leaders are not just considered target groups for project work, but partners in developing processes and carrying out activities together. The organisation's field workers come

from different communities and are able to reflect together their own involvement, their own biases, responsibilities and feelings of guilt. This openness is essential for working on real changes. Hindu field workers are developing confidence among Muslim women in neighbourhoods that have suffered from Hindu perpetrators. Belonging to the perpetrator's community – and to a wealthier middle class for that matter – definitely influences the grassroots women's perception of these field workers. But it also influences the field workers' own reactions to critical situations and decisions in the community. The group of SAHR WARU's field workers provides a role model as women from different communities conduct their programmes together. This is already beginning to show effects among the younger generation of women and girls who develop friendships across community lines.

Advocacy for justice is a constructive transformatory approach when reconciliation is talked of by those who have an interest in denying communities their rights, when genocide continues and insecurity as well as impunity prevail.

This is relevant at a time when some groups are beginning to talk of reconciliation while what they actually want to achieve is making people forget these events. While reconciliation certainly will have to happen one day this cannot be imposed from above and definitely not by the perpetrators who have not acknowledged their own involvement and responsibility. Pointing to reconciliation commissions in other parts of the world as relevant experience to be copied in Gujarat neglects the distinct situation on the ground. In its dialogue with women in the field, SAHR WARU experiences that women are still systematically denied justice. The losses they experienced are not recognised, they are not given death certificates, they are denied material compensation, they experience continued threat, etc. The conflict in Gujarat is far from over.

The communal conflict in Gujarat has not yet entered a phase of post-settlement reconciliation. Genocide continues. The need to come to terms with the genocide at a high political level and to dismantle the structures perpetuating discrimination and violence are necessary preconditions for beginning a process of healing of society and individuals. The work of organisations like SAHR WARU is empowering women at the grassroots, it is taking them serious as actors and supporting them in dealing with their own healing processes. This is an essential step into the future. It provides a basis for peace-building on a larger scale and it demonstrates how the struggle for justice and progress in the transformation of conflicts are intrinsically interlinked.

In Pakistan, civil liberties and minority rights have constantly been threatened by state and non-state actors over recent years, and women in particular have experienced an erosion of their own role in society. In this context, the three member organisations of the HAC Alliance play an important role in democratising Pakistani society in their working areas. Being based in one religious minority community they increase sensitivity to the effects of power relations, which is an important contribution for developing a society based on mutual respect and equal opportunities. Without that Pakistan as a whole risks to fail.

A striking example for conflict transformation through struggles for justice is provided by the work of the Diaconical Ministries in South India with Dalit communities. One of the interventions of the peace project is in Raja Singha Mangalam, Ramnar District, a village that experienced major caste clashes in the 1950s and 1960s when the Tamil national movements gained strength. The conflicts led to the consolidation of Dalit power in the village, but one Dalit group, the Palla, became more influential than others and began to dominate them. After the killing of one Palla leader, Dalits started to organise for peace.

The village has many different forms of caste discrimination and segregation. One of them is the so-called "2 tumbler system": Two sorts of cups made from steel or from aluminium are kept in a tea shop. Only members of the dominant caste community are served in the tea shop. Members of the weaker community get their tea served from a distance outside in the less valuable cup. Separate access to food and water are characteristics of the caste system and "untouchability" is most visible here. Initially, negotiation with the tea-shop owner did not lead to any changes as he feared losing customers. Peace volunteers made friends with four young men from the dominant community and slowly convinced them to take up this issue. In

> Struggles by minority rights groups can increase the society's sensitivity for the impact of power relations in conflicts.

spite of some resistance within the community, they were able to address the issue through persistent dialogue and come to an agreement with the tea-shop owner. Now the shop is used by all villagers without segregation.

In 2002, the DM began to identify two people as future peace volunteers in each village. They were men and women, members of different caste groups. Often they are young people and if they belonged to dominant castes, their parents and relatives opposed their becoming active against

the caste segregation. In the case of lower caste persons they were initially very suspicious why the organiser, a member of a higher caste, was approaching them. But slowly changes began to happen. Children were sent to mixed tuition classes, people began to visit each other.

What probably helped is the change in economic circumstances. In older times, economic relationships were marked by dependence, a system that favoured static caste relationships. Now this has been slowly replaced by a "pay for labour" system. Many people also started self-employment and gained confidence. Sometimes members of lower castes pay labourers from higher castes. Where economic and educational background of two caste groups do not differ much there are cases of inter-caste marriages. The younger generation in particular takes a lead in facilitating changes. Older people adjust as they fear losing influence otherwise. Peace volunteers report that changes happen more quickly in areas where the discriminated community is in numerical majority. Also, women prove to be more pragmatic and open to organise for change.

Development and economic change influence caste injustice, but not in a simplistic manner – they may create more openness for overcoming old dependencies, but in other cases these differences could also become obstacles for development.

But the situation differs from village to village and often the resistance to change is strong, showing that economic changes do not automatically let old social injustices wither away. In such cases, DM needs to cooperate with the more open-minded parts of community. At South Kavanoor women spearheaded an inter-dining programme. Around a meeting that Dalits and non-Dalits took part in, a meal prepared by the Dalit women was served to all people. Some of the men, especially from wealthier families disagreed and went away. The others remained and ate together. After this experience, Dalit and non-Dalit women formed an association in order to work on issues of common concern, mostly development issues. In the beginning, the women had been afraid of change. When the DM organiser began to talk to them, some were suspicious and others thought, "let him have the beating first". However, they were able to be convinced and to overcome their suspicion faster than others in the village. Their interest in benefitting from development activities may have been a strongly motivating factor.

Segregation of castes for drinking tea and for meals touches the dignity of those who are classified as inferior. The South Kavanoor example, however, shows the many layers of the problem. Here, two Dalit communi-

ties live side by side: the Hindu Pallas and the Christian Aranthathias. Obviously the Pallas are wealthier and in larger numbers. There are about 400 Palla families as against 60 Aranthathiar families in South Kavanoor.

In November 2004, violent clashes between both communities erupted leaving part of the village destroyed, the cemetery desecrated and eight people in hospital. The violence was triggered by the sale of a piece of land by an Aranthathiar to a Palla and the closure of a path leading to a well by the Arathathiar neighbours.

> Backwardness was used to gain power over other marginalised groups: this increased alienation.

But the conflict goes deeper. At one time, most of the land belonged to the Aranthathiar families in the village. Slowly, Palla families bought more and more land. As Dalit Hindus they could profit from the "positive discrimination" offered to backward castes by the government, including cheap loans which were used for buying land. The Aranthathiars as Christians were not entitled to any official support (see chapter 1.4.). Moreover, the Pallas are the strongest community in the region, and have managed to get power in politics and administration. The representative of the political constituency is reserved to a member of the backward castes, a reservation that the Aranthathiars want to see removed. They do not feel represented by state structures any more. In the village today the electricity and the water supplies are under Palla control. They employ Aranthathiar labourers to till their land. The Aranthathiars, now a minority in the village, observe how they are becoming more and more marginalised: "since childhood we feel that the others oppress us," said an Aranthathiar villager.

> "Since childhood we feel that the others oppress us."

The conflict is about the dignity of a lower caste among two Dalit communities, but it is more about control of the means for economic advancement: posts in state administration and legislation, access to benefits, supply of essential services like water and electricity. And more than that, it is motivated by the experience of having been marginalised and the fear of slowly losing even the rest of control over their future. The dominant community can refer to legality and even to commonly shared values, but it does not understand the fears of the minority. Old caste hierarchies are activated as a base for collective identity building where economic resources become scarce.

The DM peace project has identified the village as an area of intervention and established trust on both sides of the divide. The DM is disadvantaged because the church is part of the conflict and both the communities are of different religious persuasions. Much work needs to be done by peace volunteers to bring the communities together for dialogue. However, the chances are good that a well-planned intervention by the peace project can use the existing openness on the side of the dominant community and can contribute to contain violence.

In another case, this has been successful. In a village in Kanyakumari district violence erupted in 1998 between a Dalit community adhering to the Salvation Army and a locally dominant Christian community that is part of CSI. This incident of violence was triggered by a disagreement in a case involving gambling. After parts of their village had been destroyed in the clashes, the Dalits asked for compensation from the perpetrators. A peace forum was established by DM and further violence could be prevented. The peace forum supported the Dalits in their demand and asked the CSI to take a stand in this situation. So far this has not happened. This shows the difficult role of the church in these conflicts and how much work still needs to be done even within church structures in order to be able to deal with the realities on ground. Some of the DM activists express that they wished a faster reaction by CSI and propose specific courses for pastors on these questions.

> The establishment of peace fora helped to prevent violence and dialogue over differences.

In other cases, the church does not intervene officially, even when Christian communities are denied access to a church compound. Since colonial times there has been a large and beautiful church built by missionaries in the village of Mandapasalai. On special occasions like the important Christian festivities, the community organises processions to their old church. In the last few years, members of the Marawar community, low caste Hindus who have built new houses along the access road to the church, have stopped these processions and tried to prevent them. The Dalits feel harassed by the Marawars on these grounds.

Apparently, relations were good until the end of a development project run by an international donor on the campus of the church. Both communities had been beneficiaries at that time. But the conflicts started after the end of the project. The change in attitude may have its origin in the growing self-consciousness of the Dalits. In the past, Dalits and Marawars had a nearly slave-master relationship. Dalits were not supposed to wear sandals on public roads or to wear a towel around their neck as this was consid-

ered disrespectful by the Marawars. Today they are trying to impose these symbols of subordination again, threatening those who do not obey with beating. But Dalits are not cooperating with the oppression any more as they have also become economically more independent.

Another factor in the rise of caste identities is the arrival of religious extremism in the village: the Hindu right has succeeded in organising the varna castes. This legitimises their superiority over the Dalits and creates a situation ready for further escalation.

The Bishop of the Madurai-Ramnar diocese, Rt. Rev. Christopher Asir went with a team to Mandapasalai in order to promote dialogue. However, here the Church of South India and the DM peace project find it difficult to develop leverage on this situation as CSI is perceived as partisan supporting the Dalits. Furthermore, there are high risks that the conflict may become a larger social confrontation between religious minorities and the fundamentalism of the Hindu extreme right. The local peace forum has not yet been able to integrate members of different communities that are open to work on building peace constituencies. The issue is seen as a struggle for justice.

> Bringing justice issues into the open contains risks of escalating latent conflict into violence: instruments of control are needed.

Demanding justice can be the trigger to let communal violence erupt. In one case, a Muslim businessman had a relationship with a Dalit girl who became pregnant as a consequence. Her family complained to the police, but the officials were bribed by the businessman and nothing happened to deal with the issue. As justice and social power are inter-linked, this situation might easily have degenerated into violence.. In training, volunteers first talk about communal harmony, then about social justice and injustice like "untouchability". Usually DM tries to involve volunteers from all sides. Through analysing the cases together, they come to understand that the struggle for social equality need not increase violence but can lead to communal harmony.

> Bringing about unity among the marginalised communities against domination is the focus of the peace programme.

The peace programme is guided by the vision to bring about unity among Dalit communities and lower castes in order to forge a stronger coalition against higher caste domination in the south of Tamil Nadu. Lower castes and Dalits form the major part of the economically poorer sections of society. However, the peace intervention through

this project does not provide development benefits as a priority. In some cases relief has been organised. Women's associations at a local level that emerge from the peace activities are involved in looking for concrete economic changes in their situation. This has been supported by DM, mainly through linking them to other actors, like other social programmes by CSI/DM, government agencies or other NGOs.

The need for economic change is felt by every population experiencing marginalisation. Peace volunteers and peace fora do not generate income and their potential effect of creating an environment favourable to development is not directly visible. These pose challenges to DM on two levels: on communicating the planned impact of the peace activities and on responding to the economic needs of the communities.

Examples from other conflict areas in South Asia show that this tension between non-economic intervention in a situation where basic needs are very pressing and the will to provide concrete help is very common. The commitment to economic justice and to peace needs to be given equal importance and strategies need to be developed to respond to both, either by the same organisations or by a division of labour between different actors. An intervener in conflicts needs a clear mandate and to guard his neutrality towards the conflict parties in order to be effective. Development aid influences power relations and may endanger the non-partisan stand. Providing contacts to other actors in the field who are better able to provide development assistance seems to be a good solution.

The violent conflict between Pallas and Aranthathiars in South Kavanoor shows that local intervention can develop options to ease the violence and lead to more cooperation among the villagers. But the basic questions, like the relative advantage of the Palla community by benefiting from positive discrimination, is an issue that local intervention does not touch. Here, a higher level of decision-making would have to be addressed.

The cases where DM intervenes in show that castism is a relevant feature in many of the violent clashes. The effect and the role of caste identities varies, however. In some cases, caste hierarchies are reaffirmed when Dalits develop self-esteem and improve economically. In other cases, caste relationships divide the Dalits and lead to petty fighting where unity to confront the important issues about the welfare of the population needs to be addressed and the caste system as such questioned in order to stand against the oppression of all communities at the lower end of the hierarchy. Again, in other cases caste is used to mobilise politically in a larger political arena.

The CSI as an institutional church has not yet developed a consistent position on these issues. This is felt by DM workers and volunteers when they have to deal with conflicts on the ground. CSI is perceived as having various other priorities, Christian Dalit communities feel that they are not receiving sufficient support from their church. At times DM activists feel that they need to take a stand constructively critical of their mother church.

Gender Perspectives on Conflict Transformation

War and violent conflict affect men and women differently. Therefore, conflict transformation also has to look into the gender dimensions of the respective conflict. This fact is however rarely addressed by male-dominated organisations, for obvious reasons. Often it is only when their female membership is sufficiently empowered to take on decision-making responsibility – and not only "participate" – or when in a given context women's organisations or feminist groups take up this issue, that the agency of women in conflict is highlighted: they may be victims or survivors as well as perpetrators or agents for change. Changes in strategies require that their male colleages are made aware of the gender issues involved as well.

Working through a gender perspective is not a luxury. Conflict transformation risks becoming just another instrument in reinforcing injustice if it does not recognise the power imbalances between men and women as well as the role and function of concepts of masculinity and femininity and their effects on conflict dynamics, root causes and consequences of violence. Moreover, opportunities for transformative action and addressing violence are lost. Therefore empowerment of men and women for conflict transformation needs to be based on an analysis of power relations including those between the two sexes, exposing roles, images, values, symbols and structures related to gender concepts that influence behaviour, attitudes and structures.

> Working on conflict transformation through a gender perspective is essential, not a luxury.

In armed conflicts and at times of high insecurity, gender roles are often becoming more rigid: women may be more confined to their households and their mobility is reduced. For example, the genocide in Gujarat led to Muslim women losing exposure with other communities. They became more secluded in an inward-looking community. Often, the workload for women increases, as part of the family income may get lost. Masculinity is defined through a militarised discourse and men who

are not able to protect their families or communities suffer from loss of respect. Very often these role conflicts lead to domestic violence. Strategies for conflict transformation need to take these realities into account.

In the context of this study, feminist organisations Awaz-e-Niswan in Lahore, SAHR WARU and Olakh in Gujarat as well as the women's committees of the networks UNMM and HTNF provide approaches towards a gender-sensitive perspective of conflict transformation.

The feminist organisation Awaz-e-Niswan recognises that change has to happen with women as well as with men. More than one third of their activists are men providing a different role model for men, which is rather new in Pakistani society. Through its theatre group, Awaz-e-Niswan highlights the interconnectedness of different forms of violence in Pakistani society. Violence against religious minorities, violence based on ethnic biases, domestic and public violence as well as structural violence against women are shown as facets of similar mechanisms with effects that deprive the victims of their dignity and society of its creative potential. It proposes changes in patriarchal role models and images that continue to generate violence between and within communities. For this purpose it relates to positive traditions that reinforce the sense of community, like popular festivals. Their theatre plays stimulate discussions among the audience.

Highlighting the interconnectedness of different forms of violence and patriarchal society's difficulties in dealing with conflicts

The change in perspective that the women's committee of HTNF contributes to the network in assessing the situation in the CHT as a pre-conflict situation based on indicators of violence against women, has been presented elsewhere in this study (see page 71). The example of UNMM shows that in order to include women in the network, a first step was to create a safe space for women organisations to come together and build their own perspective on all levels of the organisation. Their experience also shows that this is but a first step. Based on this, their perspective needs to be integrated through systems allowing for equal participation in decision-making.

UNMM adopted a women's empowerment programme at the end of 2001. This led to the creation of the Women's Desk. In 2003 UNMM conducted a pilot study on violence and conflict affecting women in Manipur. After a gender workshop, UNMM adopted a gender policy in order to work against discrimination and for gender equity within its own struc-

tures. Though women have been meeting regularly, developed leadership skills are now being heard within UNMM, traditional patriarchal role models re-emerge within the network's structure and activities. Women are demanding more concern from their male colleagues within UNMM.

The historical and recent examples show that women can play a powerful role in Manipur's society Until now most of the women's organisations have been along their specific ethnic background. Within their communities they have contributed greatly to conflict transformation both in the valley and in the hills. Only recently, more and more experiences with common platforms across ethnic dividesare reported. In 2002, UNMM's women empowerment programme succeeded in integrating the conflicting Meitei and Maring communities in rebuilding a destroyed market in Thoubal district. In 2003, in Churachandpur district after a seminar on violence against women, women from the Kuki and Paite communities stood together in demanding an end to violence between their communities and worked for a de-escalation of the tense situation. Women often find it easier than men to address military leaders across ethnic lines in case of tensions or abductions and negotiate non-violent solutions to these problems. UNMM's women's group is convinced that the conflict around AFSPA can only been resolved by women through non-violent means as the military is powerless against these.

> It is not sufficient to give women a separate unit dealing with "their" issues – women and men have to be integrated in structures for decision – making and planning.

So far, the engagement of women in the conflict has mainly been inspired by the suffering that women undergo from the ongoing low-intensity war. As a result of gender discrimination, many women do not have access to analytical skills and skills for leadership which would empower them to increase their effectiveness and go beyond single issues to address the transformation of the conflict causing the war. More and more women, however, understand the interconnectedness of women's issues with transforming conflict and begin to look beyond ethnic boundaries that are also present among NGOs. Experiencing similar forms of discrimination as women irrespective of their ethnic identity serves as a strong connector between them. They feel that women are misused by male political interests when they are communally divided or bribed for their objectives.

> Women often find it easier than men to address military leaders across ethnic lines.

Basing their thinking on these examples, UNMM's women group and some of UNMM's male leaders are confident that women in Manipur could play a more active and effective role in peace processes, provided they are given adequate training and space. The women trained as LCP trainers have already proven their excellent capacities and potential. A need for a larger number of women trained as multipliers and participants in LCP training has been expressed. By the end of 2005 women in UNMM had used their skills to actively participate in analysing the conflicts in Manipur and debating their results with the male leaders of the network.

In another part of India, after the genocide of 2002 the Gujarati feminist organisation SAHR WARU organised women in those neighbourhoods of Ahmedabad affected by the massacres. The main purpose of bringing women together outside their homes was to provide them space and a platform to express themselves freely. Through sharing, they began to understand that even if they come from different family backgrounds, different areas, different customs, they are still all women and face similar life situations and problems. Together they looked for solutions to problems. Discussions dealt with around difficulties of earning the family's livelihood, domestic violence and alcoholism, rape and other forms of sexualised violence, discrimination against the girl child, the dowry system and the practise of dowry killings.

One of the issues discussed was the lack of assistance by the police in case of sexual harassment. This brought SAHR WARU to begin legal literacy education in order to impart information about the role and function of the police, their structures and the functioning of the judiciary. Women are empowered to deal with authorities. One team member of SAHR WARU expresses this in her own words: "I had been to the police station earlier, but now after joining SAHR WARU I have the confidence and the strength to deal with police officials alone,

"I used to fear the police but now I don't."

once when they demanded money for travel I paid them and asked for the change. When they did not respond I successfully insisted on getting the change money back. I used to fear the police but now I don't".

Another activity is the legal aid programme bringing together SAHR WARU activists with women community leaders. They form the "women's watch councils", consultative committees to act on crimes against women. Each member observes the situation of women in her respective area. Any violence against women is reported back to the committee and acted

upon. The women are trained to become sufficiently well versed with relevant personal laws and are now being trained in constitutional laws with exposure to the Gujarat State Legal Services Authority. This authority maintains a legal aid clinic with a women's cell providing free legal service to anyone in need.

After the 2002 genocide, women in the affected areas became more reluctant to leave their homes and their residence areas for education. In two areas, in Gomtipur and in Naroda Patia, the organisation set up women's community centres. In Gomtipur, a suburb which had experienced much police atrocity during the genocide, the centre was established in a rented house as a common meeting place for women from different religious communities. It is situated in a place where women from either side will not feel a bias. The centre is looked upon as a bridge in bringing together women and girls from Hindu and Muslim communities through various activities of the organisation, be it group meetings, literacy classes, committee meetings, trainings and workshops, computer classes or just coming in whenever they pass by from here.

In Naroda Patia the centre was established in the middle of the suburb highly affected by the violence. Priority was given to allow unhindered access to women and girls of the area, mostly belonging to Muslim families. Whereas in Gomtipur women from both sides begin to meet, in Naroda Patia the trauma of being attacked and humiliated is still too great and SAHR WARU decided to make this the focus of their attention. SAHR WARU deliberately began with tailoring classes being held at this place as suggested by a resident of the area.

In addition to these activities, SAHR WARU organised gender-awareness-raising courses with participants from all of their areas of intervention. Especially for girls and young women, these are some of the very few or even only activities where they could leave their residential areas, talk about their dreams and wishes, discuss and develop them together with others, even across community divides.

In some places SAHR WARU also reached out to men and boys affected by the violence and brought these male survivors together for trauma counselling sessions. It seems important to include men into strategy-building against violence. In conflict, men are often challenged in their traditional roles by the violence they and their community face. They need to be assisted in finding other ways of empowerment than defining their role through power over others.

SAHR WARU's main peace-building intervention is at the grassroots level in order to strengthen women's leadership in communities. It recognises that women were especially targeted and differently affected by the genocide of 2002 than men. It does not isolate women from men, but it acknowledges that women are victimised structurally and directly in a double sense through the existing patriarchal system as well as through the violence against the minority. The intervention empowers women to leave the victims' role and become survivors and actors in society and in their own lives. It also creates preconditions for uniting women beyond communities on issues that concern them.

> Intervening to empower women to leave the victims' role and become survivors and actors in society and in their own lives, creating the conditions for uniting women beyond communities on issues that concern them

This process is slow, difficult, but important. Probably building up an empowered peace constituency from below is only possible through a long-term approach to overcome the system of violence. It demands sensitivity in respect of the trauma experienced, the cultural specificity and to the economic dependency that women and families in the affected areas live with. It also demands a constant reflection of the NGO's role and biases as well as observation of how the main actors perceive it.

On 4 March 2002, four days after the beginning of the violence against the Muslim minority in Gujarat, Olakh began relief activities in the southern Gujarati city Vadodara in a situation where only Muslim relief organisations had involved themselves, whereas the majority community organisations remained absent – unlike the relief experiences after the earthquake of 2001. Olakh set a clear sign as a voice of secular civil society in an increasingly communal discourse in Gujarat.

Olakh began to work in three urban and one rural settlements. The criteria for the choice of these areas were the level of poverty, the affectedness by violence and destruction, the population mix and the fact that others were not yet working in these areas. Only one of these areas, Kalyan-Nagar in Vadodara, had experienced relatively little destruction. Kalyan-Nagar has approximately equal populations of Hindus and Muslims, and this may have prevented the violence. However, the residents were living in an atmosphere of mistrust and fear. Festivals especially are times when tension rises.

Knowing its own strengths, Olakh deliberately concentrated on activities that would have less tangible results than house-building or direct income generating activities. With the objective of bringing people together, pro-

viding psychosocial care and developing female leadership in the public sphere, in early 2003 Olakh began to establish creative learning centres and hand them over to the community. These centres provide a shared space for both communities involved and a common platform to promote intercommunity engagement. They also provide an open space that women and other members of the community could use for learning, sharing information, experiences or stories, organise classes, celebrate and develop activities together. Libraries, subscription to newspapers and, in at some places, computer courses are provided. These centres reach about 5,000 families belonging to different communities.

Creating "public protected spaces" to break the power of exclusion and provide concrete opportunities for development beyond the narrow limits of the community

The objectives of these centres are:

- **To create a safe and trusting environment where women can vent their feelings and express their thoughts, share their experiences to address post traumatic disorders and rebuild their strengths, relationships and support networks**

- **To create competent value-based cadre of human personnel at information, knowledge, attitudes and skill levels**

- **Capacity and perspective building at all levels to strengthen the process of collective leadership and shared power for reconciliation**

- **To create physical and emotional space at the doorstep with community ownership to promote inter and intra community interactions and engagements**

- **To create women's leadership as "artisans of society" by building capacity and strengthening their knowledge base**

- **To address issues of common concern and conflict resolution through formation of area committees and self-help groups**

- **To create an emotional and psychosocial support and services at the doorstep**

- **Constant need assessment through action-research.**

The concept of providing "public protected spaces" in situations where women are discouraged by social conflict or its effects from leaving their households or their communities has been developed in other conflict areas as well. In Afghanistan for example, media centres were established by a small grassroots NGO in different towns, women were encouraged to take responsibilities. In a situation of insecurity limitations to expression and participation could this way be overcome. Olakh in Vadodara, like SAHR WARU in Ahmedabad, provides these "public protected spaces" at a local level and gains experience with including members of different communities.

Giving women the opportunity to go beyond the limits of their community goes against the current tendency of ghettoisation of religious communities. In Gujarat, Muslim families are moving more and more into neighbourhoods inhabited by only their own community. Here, they feel more secure, but at the same time this makes them more vulnerable to attacks from outside. And it creates less space for divergent approaches within the community, a factor especially disadvantaging women as the oppressed segment within the community itself. Indirectly, this ghettoisation also affects the majority community negatively as it decreases their capacity to understand the Indian social fabric as composite, a factor that has in the past been a strong point of Indian culture: its capacity to incorporate new elements coming from outside and developing a cultural syncretism.

In principle, these learning centres could be used by women from all communities. In reality, acceptance by the dominant community in some places is low due to intra-community pressures. This demands much patience and effort by the activists. In Maretha – a rural area close to Vadodara – Dalits and Muslims had been living together closely for many decades, and side by side with high caste Hindus, without any occurrence of direct violence. Therefore it came as a surprise when the Dalit community became instrumental to the destruction of Muslim property. In Maretha village 65 Muslim houses were looted and destroyed, Muslim families left the area. The first families did not return back to the area for 11 months. All the small business premises of Muslims were taken over by Hindus who boycotted them socially and economically. In spite of protective police points set up for a year, stones were thrown at Muslim houses at night. The intensity of the events explains the difficulty for Olakh to organise across these divides. So far, it has been possible to include only some of the families in the centre's activities so far. Muslims had been the shop owners that many Dalits were indebted to. This made it easy to turn one oppressed

community against a minority. Trust still needs to develop. Higher caste Hindus are still not participating in this case as social distance is considerable: caste difference and prosperity play a role in defining who can be approached.

In the beginning of OLAKH's work in these regions, the focus had been clearly on the effects of the genocide. But after two years of work, the focus slowly began to change. Women began to break the silence and start to talk about the violence in their homes and communities. This made women from different communities begin to understand and identify with each other as their experiences were similar. However, now the men, who had been favourable to OLAKH's efforts as long as they profited, began to feel challenged. In some cases they tried to prevent their women from participating in the centre's activities.

But Olakh's activities went beyond that. To promote peace and amity in the communities affected by violence, Olakh organised a Maitri Yatra (a friendship rally) and performed the street play "Lassonwala Chahcha" about a garlic seller who is depicted as a protagonist for peace. Social reconciliation programmes have also been built around sports such as friendly community cricket matches, painting and theatre workshops, and speak-out sessions and exposure visits.

On 8 March 2003, 65 Dalit and Muslim women who had not spoken to each other since the beginning of the genocide were taken to the Gandhi Ashram in Ahmedabad. This started the process of inter-community dialogue and inter-community engagement between women. The shared experience of the trip helped to build solidarity among women from different communities. Through this dialogue women discover how collective identities created around religion are used by the powerful to justify violence. This also started a process of building women's leadership at the wider community level. Other exposure visits included a trip to Bombay and participation in the World Social Forum. Whereas women often face a lot of pressure not

Collective Initiatives for Justice:

"Here women from all strata come together listen and address various issues primarily domestic violence and other conflicts at area level across the caste, class and religion. They play the role of mediator and try to resolve conflicts through collective process and decision-making, which creates interdependence and bonding. Here women talk about their issues and other women across religion engage in a process of sharing and identifying. Violence is a common issue for all thus it is a common thread to bind them together. This has built the primary identity as women and created immediate support structures for each other."

to speak up while they are in their residential areas, these trips give them the distance to use the new space to learn, to develop courage and to withstand this pressure after their return home. Often, this is the first time that they can free themselves of these social pressures.

Olakh activists face opposition because of their stand for justice and against oppression. In Maretha village they were intimidated to leave the village and stop activities there. Olakh intensified its lobby work up to high political levels in Gujarat and was able to withstand the pressure. While asserting their right to work in Maretha, they also created realities for the women: Maretha became known to political decision-makers all over the state. An apparent disadvantage was turned into an opportunity.

Olakh takes a partisan stand in the conflicts with state authorities and actors promoting intolerance based on the construction of religious identities. It is partial for women as the section of society that is doubly oppressed. In practical work it is also seen as partial with the minority community, taking the standpoint of the marginalised, e.g. when opening a centre at Maretha village in a room rented from a Muslim family. However, Olakh portrays this partisanship with a strong reference to rights and commonly accepted secular norms.

Olakh takes up the issue of reconciliation after the 2002 genocide. It rightly questions the meaning of reconciliation in a situation of impunity and failing justice to the survivors. In this context it also points out that reconciliation efforts often refer to a "better past" that in the case of Gujarat does not exist. Although there were numerous points of contact, cohabitation and living side by side of both communities in Gujarat, in many cases previous to the genocide no close contacts existed between the communities. Women in particular had very little opportunity to come into contact with one another.

A member of a Collective Initiative for Justice:

"When we come together we forget our pain and sorrow beyond caste and religion, we women feel more secure amongst ourselves – we are women with common destinies."

Therefore, Olakh's journey of rehabilitation continued with the creation of processes of social reconciliation in an atmosphere of extreme adversities and divisiveness of religions and gender. A new strategy of a women's collective named "Collective Initiative for Justice" was created. This is a place where women of diverse and varied backgrounds come together and learn to address issues of violence from self to family to community across religion and caste lines. The sharing creates interdependence and bonding.

Olakh's effort therefore is not just a rebuilding of relationships of before the genocide – it is constructing elements of a different, hopefully more just, future relationship.

Partnership in Conflict Transformation

The primary and ultimate responsibility for conflict transformation at grassroots level lies with the people and communities directly affected. They were involved long before outsiders began to pay attention to the conflict, and they have to bear the consequences of any action taken long after supporters have left. Although they address conflict locally, they cannot neglect other dimensions up to the global level of conflict. They can also profit from linking to actors beyond their usual range of contacts. What does partnership mean in this context?

As a Delhi-based organisation, the Institute for Social Democracy has considerably evolved in its effort to train activists from grassroots organisation in northern India. Developing the concept of "composite heritage" into an instrument for violence prevention and peace-building, it discovered in its dialogue with participants in the courses that heritage means something different to a member of the urban upper middle class than to a member of a rural grassroots initiative in the Hindi belt. Miniature painting and classical music were not so much in the minds of the latter people as shared local festivals, shrines visited by people of different religions, day-to-day culture like food and dresses. ISD when preparing a training manual always included newly acquired learning from the exposure with the participants.

Learning and developing mutually by taking reference groups seriously and valuing their experience

This method creates a quality of partnership where the reference groups of the NGO – individual training participants, local groups and initiatives, activists – feel respected and taken seriously. Their expertise and knowledge is acknowledged as relevant. They own the process. And they understand that ISD is practising what it wants to promote: the dynamic process of asserting and reinventing the composite character of South Asian civilisation.

ISD and community activists working with the concept of composite heritage acknowledge that conflicts will continue to exist in spite of culture being composite and being recognised as such. Being plural and syncretic does not mean that a society is going to be harmonious. The understanding

of composite heritage provides an ideological basis, a value system to which to refer when working within communities, but it does not respond to

- concrete interests that power stakeholders may have when dividing communities
- the concrete needs that populations have in an age of globalisation
- acute large-scale violence

Therefore, additional skills need to be imparted, skills of analysis of interests and needs, skills to increase security, negotiation and other conflict transformation skills. For ISD this could either mean to also enter these areas of potential activities or to become an organisation helping the reference groups to access such skill development activities through other NGOs in their respective regions, where even other EED partner organisations are active and could be approached.

Also organisations like SAHR WARU and Olakh recognise their interdependency with local communities. As South Asian NGOs are often founded in an urban middle class context, involving activists from within the grassroots communities is a big challenge. SAHR WARU has been able to recruit community workers from within the local communities affected by the violence. This increases acceptance but also provides organisational challenges that SAHR WARU needs to work on during the accompaniment of their staff. When Hindu activists work in Muslim communities of survivors of violence, several challenges emerge: how will they be perceived by the survivors and how much will they be identified with the violence committed by members of their own community? How to deal with the own feeling of shame and guilt? How does this influence the effectiveness of our work?

From its interaction with grassroots communities in the aftermath of the communal violence of 2002 Olakh learned that it had to restructure its own organisation. It recognised that it was no coincidence that both staff and board did not include members of minority communities. This was changed and increased the strength of the organisation.

Partnership of the NGOs with EED also poses challenges as well as opportunities. The main role of EED is to provide financial support to local organisations and networks. Furthermore, EED provides accompaniment and support for capacity-building through initiatives such as the PISA programme or skill development on LCP and Do No Harm. An essential condition for developing trust between EED and South Asian organisations and making sustainable impacts possible has been the ability

of EED to commit on a long-term basis. While funding on a project basis which implies limited funding periods of three to four year periods, EED works on a long-term basis with partner organisations implementing these projects. Conflict scenarios and conflict transformation processes require such a commitment over time.

On a short or medium term basis the effects of interventions for development and conflict transformation rarely show up as factors due to political changes beyond control and tend to develop differently than anticipated. Contexts in regions of violent conflict are complex and activities do not follow a linear pattern of input and output relationship. Bi- and multilateral agencies in the field of development aid often have difficulties in adapting their support instruments to these dynamics due to their institutional limitations.

> Partnership in conflict transformation needs long-term commitment beyond the life-cycles of projects and funding periods.

> Activities to transform conflict often do not follow linear patterns and therefore demand trust and openness between partners to be able to adapt to dynamic conflict.

EED has been cooperating with some of its present partner organisations for more than a decade. In the case of the Church of South India the partnership goes back several decades. This provides an atmosphere of trust, an openness to talk about weaknesses and challenges without a constant fear of loosing the donor partner. In particularly difficult conflict settings the continuity of EED staff working with partner organisations in those region was important to develop credibility and trust in order to involve them in strategising. The cooperation of EED with UNMM in Manipur is a striking example of this.

Based on these experiences, EED has the potential to share its findings in long-term involvement in conflict transformation processes as part of its development support to a larger development constituency who may be keen to learn about their methods to suit conflict transformation needs. Together with its partners EED should also take on the task of developing instruments and criteria to measure the effects of conflict transformation strategies.

UNMM is also an example which demonstrates that working in conflict regions is a constant struggle with limitations by third parties. Access to the north-eastern states of India is restricted and always depends on the goodwill of several authorities. The presence of foreigners creates risks for

local NGOs and local people as any incident harmful to expatriates may provoke military action. Besides, the donor partner also has a responsibility to ensure the security of their staff. Such working conditions are a challenge to EED and require creative solutions without putting the commitment to work for conflict transformation at stake.

In long-term partnerships based on trust and mutual understanding, it is also important to raise the issue of under what conditions and how a donor organisation should withdraw its support. A sudden withdrawal might be understood as a lack of support and may threaten the sustainability of the programme impact or even put local actors under threat.

Often these considerations do not form part of the planning of local organisations involved in conflict transformation. Transferring responsibility to local actors is a well accepted principle, however rarely implemented in conflict intervention. Too little is known about strategies and other options, about who would be the actors to whom protective roles could be transferred, for example.

Role transformation and withdrawal scenarios have to be developed by intervenors in conflict situations right from the beginning in order not to put communities or local actors for peace at risk.

In Nepal INSEC faces similar questions in its zones of intervention. INSEC's presence is dependent on donor support by several donors also beyond EED. Short-term project-related financial support makes it difficult to sustain a presence in a place over time. An interruption or discontinuation of funding in the case of changing interest among the donors would result in an end to the project or at least in a dramatic reduction of activities. Although local community groups, like those met in Banke district, talk about their newly acquired empowerment, they also insist that they would need an INSEC presence for a longer time to come in order to feel secure and be supported in the action they take.

This constellation raises the issue of sustainability. Presence is an activity that demands a relatively low budget. However, experienced and committed personnel is rare in Nepal and will be interested in finding other opportunities if donors do not commit themselves on a long-term basis to such a project.

As sudden withdrawal from an area of intervention could result in putting local communities at risk, INSEC would have to develop withdrawal scenarios immediately with the start of a peace presence in an area and

local communities would have to know from the beginning that INSEC's presence is limited in scope and time. They would have to be encouraged to develop their own mechanisms of protection that do not depend on INSEC's presence. The experience that these communities gain could be of interest to other communities that are not reached by INSEC's project work directly as well as for further development of the approach. For this purpose, a strategy would have to be developed to qualify people from among the victims' groups to share their learning elsewhere.

As the conditions for exit strategies for conflict interveners have rarely been discussed by organisations active in this field, INSEC's and their partner's experience would be innovative and important for the development of conflict transformation.

Networking and Lobby Support

Networking plays an important role in developing strategies for conflict transformation. Among the structures studied there were two networks (UNMM, HTNF), one alliance of groups (HAC Alliance) and one institution deeply involved in networking through training (ISD). The Diaconical Ministries of the CSI also form a sort of network having local structures acting independently, but in a coordinated effort.

The PISA programme was not planned as another network, but in fact has increased the sharing of experience and the critical discussion of experiences through its consultations and through interaction among partners. PISA was set up as a limited 3-year programme by EED from its very beginning. However, when the end of this period approached, ISD as one of the partners announced that PISA would not depend on EED support, but it is in the interest of organisations in South Asia to continue cooperation among the partners. Ownership was developed in a process that had not always been easy. It involved changes of perception when representatives from partner organisations from all over the Subcontinent met and discussed peace issues of shared concern. For example, women from Pakistan and Bangladesh and women from India had completely different assessments of the assertion of Muslim identity in their contexts – depending on the character and function of this assertiveness for a minority living under siege by communal forces from within the majority community in Gujarat or the use of Muslim identity by communal forces in Pakistan and Bangladesh to legitimise oppression. And Sri Lankans, from the background of their ongoing civil war, looked on the Muslim community as a minority ethnic identity beside Sinhalese and Tamil identities. These

debates provided eye-openers and questioned ready-made assumptions, as the relationship between individual identity and power interests in the respective societies became obvious.

Opening eyes on difference and questioning easy assumptions helped to overcome barriers and provided the ground for increasing cooperation.

EED through PISA helped to overcome barriers between groups and activists limited in their view by national borders. PISA gave birth to mechanisms of cooperation and sharing beyond these borders. Early in the process it was pointed out how much of politics and conflict dynamics in different countries are connected and need to be responded to in this complexity.

ISD, which earlier had already begun to connect local initiatives in northern India through courses, exhibitions on local fairs and peace marches, developed a different understanding on the compositeness of South Asian civilisation through including Bangladeshis and Pakistanis in their courses.

Experience with communal violence in Pakistan is interlinked with Indian experiences of an increase in religiously legitimised discrimination of minorities. Sharing experience between activist groups in the Subcontinent, especially at a time when both governments have promised to ease travel restrictions, would enlarge perspectives and enhance creativity in dealing with situations on the ground. Here donors that are in touch with NGOs on both sides could play a facilitating role. Moreover, regular cooperation on this level would contribute to building peace constituencies of interested citizens regarding the Indo-Pakistan conflicts and set examples at a time when repression of minorities in one country is often justified by the events in the other country.

Networking may help to reduce risks to life and physical integrity of activists operating in situations of threat and impunity.

For other organisations, networking may be a question of survival, as for the organisations in Gujarat as long as it ruled by a government guaranteeing impunity to perpetrators of violence or like the HAC Alliance in Pakistan. Members of groups active for minority and women's rights and against communal violence take high risks for their own lives and physical integrity. As support structures for their activities within Pakistan are either not available or weak and vulnerable themselves, they need to discuss ways of support and solidarity with their partners on the international level. This is an opportunity to move partnership beyond financial support and the donor-receiver relationship.

For organisations that are restricted by the state in their activities, like HTNF, partnership may mean very different things. As financial support in the case of HTNF is legally not possible for an outside actor, networking is required to help with contacts and access to lobby avenues for the respect to human rights and civil liberties or the implementation of commitments made by the state of Bangladesh in the peace accord both at the national and international level. Supporting movements involving themselves in conflict transformation in reaching out to other donors in order to convince them not to undermine transformation efforts or do other harm through their development activities may be another field of action.

International lobby activities may put pressure on governments to ensure guarantees for human rights, may help to keep minority rights on the agenda of transnational organisations or to move state actors to come to agreements with non-state parties in the conflict. However, very often they simply provide information to decision-makers in international – and national – governments that they do not have access to easily.

> Cooperation with lobby networks that have emerged in the global South is a new dimension not yet regularly recognised by partners in the North.

Meanwhile, important lobby organisations have developed in the South that coordinate efforts beyond state borders and thereby build influence that minorities on a national level might not have. EED's partner organisation Tebtebba, based in the Philippines, an international organisation lobbying for the rights of indigenous communities, for example, has established strong contacts in South Asia: in Bangladesh, in India and in Nepal. In Nepal, the Federation of Indigenous Peoples Organisations plays a similar role and coordinates with Tebtebba's activities at different UN agencies.

EED has put a strong emphasis on strengthening networking and recognises the need to reflect on its own approach and practice in the light of the challenges that violent conflict settings pose to development activities. This does not end at accompanying partner organisations, but also had consequences for EED's own systems of planning and support. Good governance demanded from state actors has to go along with good donorship, i.e. donorship based on and following mutually accepted principles.

This study has shown that the changes EED has undergone in order to contribute to development, justice and conflict transformation in South Asia can bear remarkable fruits. However, more needs to be done in order to counter the forces of destruction inherent in social conflict and to draw on conflict's capacity to promote change with justice.

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Abbreviations

AFSPA	Armed Forces Special Powers Act
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
CATHE	Community Awareness and Training on Human Rights and Education
CDA	Collaborative for Development Action, Cambridge, USA
CHT	Chittagong Hill Tracts
CP	Communist Party
CSI	Church of South India
DM	Diaconical Ministries
EC	Executive Committee
EED	Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst (Church Development Service)
HFO	Human Friends Organisation
HTNF	Hill Tracts NGO Forum
INSEC	Informal Sector Service Centre
ISD	Institute for Social Democracy
LCP	Local Capacities for Peace
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
PBI	Peace Brigades International
PCJSS	Parbatya Chattagram Jana Samhati Samiti (Chittagong Hill Tracts People's Solidarity Association)
PISA	Peace in South Asia
RSS	Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh (National Volunteer Association)
UNMM	United NGO Mission to Manipur
UP	Uttar Pradesh

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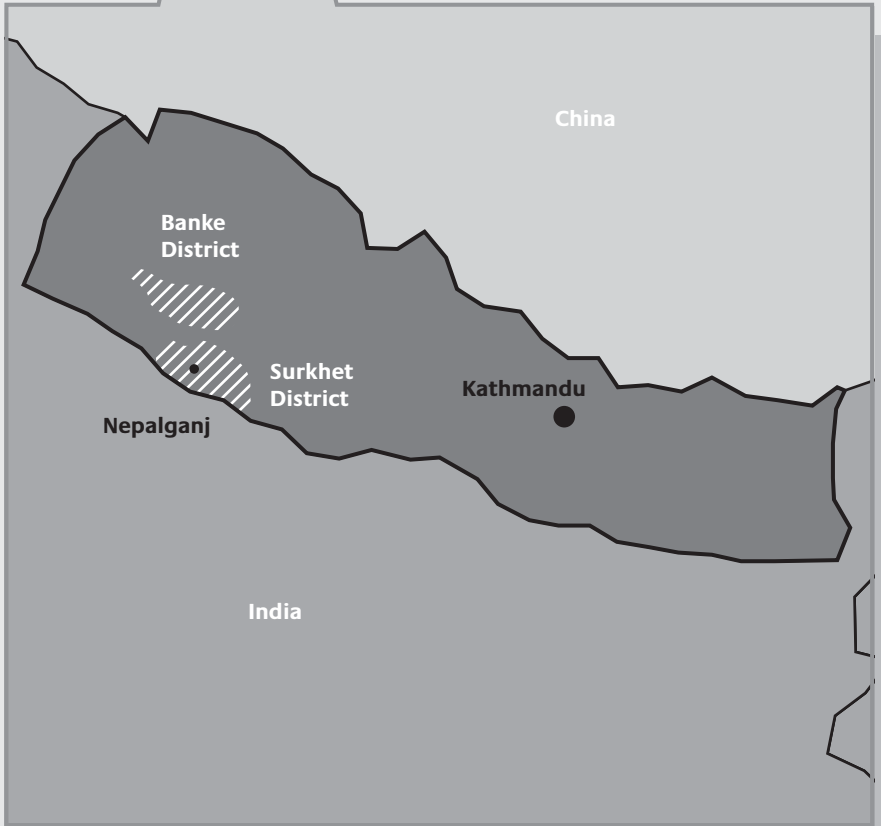
Map of Asia

Afghanistan

China

Nepal

Bhutan

Pakistan

India

Myanmar

Bangladesh

Arabian
Sea

Bay of Bengal

Sri Lanka

Map of Pakistan

Islamabad

Afghanistan

Line of
Control

Lahore •

Punjab

Balochistan

Sindh

India

Arabian
Sea

Map of Bangladesh

Nepal

Bhutan

India

Rajshani

Dhaka

Dhaka

Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT)

India

Chittagong

Khulna

Myanmar

Bay of Bengal

Map of Nepal

China

Banke
District

Surkhet
District

Kathmandu

Nepalganj

India

Afghanistan

China

Pakistan

Nepal

New Dehli

Uttar
Pradesh

Lucknow

Ahmedabad

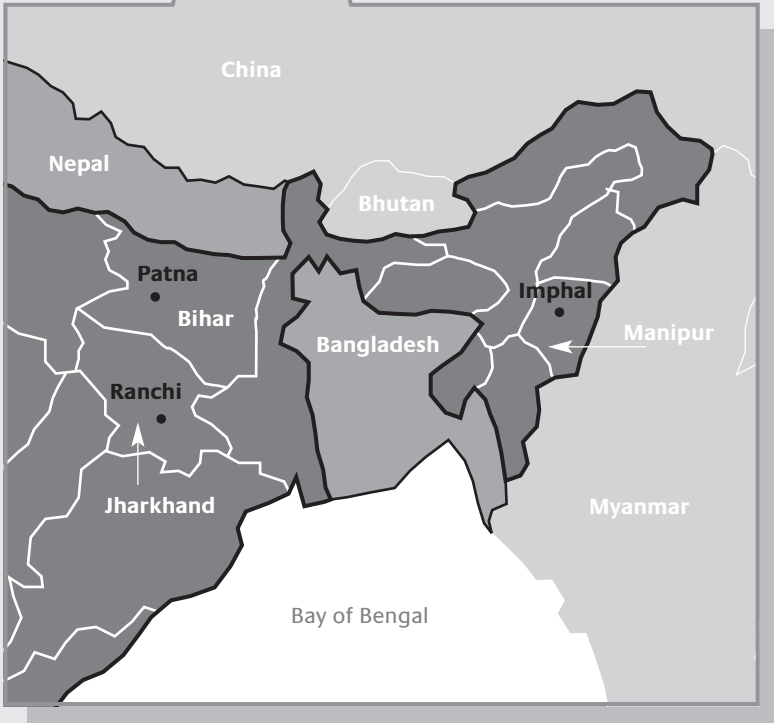Gujarat

Vadodara

Arabian
Sea

Bay of Bengal

Tamil Nadu

Madurai

Sri Lanka

Map of India

People Building Peace

Transforming Violent Conflict
in South Asia

Transforming violent conflict is a collective effort. This book explores
the treasure of experiences that civil society organisations in South
Asia in partnership with EED have made in the past years. It relates
them to the "state of the art" of theories of conflict transformation
as perceived in academic reflection – and challenges some of the
commonly held assumptions.