



# **Practice to Policy**

## **Making the Connections**

This film was commissioned by Responding to Conflict. It was filmed by Robert Maletta and produced by Trojan Horse Productions Ltd with funding from Comic Relief and the Samuel Rubin Foundation.

## **NOTES ACCOMPANYING THE 'FROM PRACTICE TO POLICY' VIDEO**

### **1) Introduction**

This video is the fifth in a series, which looks at conflicts in four different African countries: Kenya, Somaliland, Uganda and South Africa. The video addresses the gap that often exists between practitioners and policy makers by examining local peace initiatives and hearing the views of policy makers working in these countries.

It is not just Governments and the United Nations that engage in peace building. Local communities are also involved through community leaders and grassroots groups such as women and youth. More and more communities are developing their own conflict analysis and using traditional and modern methods to try and peacefully transform the world around them.

These local initiatives are often not reported in the media or taken into account in the policy making of Governments and international NGOs. As a result, policies may be formulated that lack the key elements necessary for effective development and can hinder or even destroy peace building at community level.

In the words of Randolph Kent of the UN, " I think it's very important to stress that ultimately peace is and starts between and amongst communities and people, and without a focus on the grassroots, on the way that people can get together and to reconcile their differences, there can never be any enduring peace. Peace cannot be imposed."

How then can grassroots opinion be incorporated into peacebuilding and be reflected in the policies and approaches of Governments and international NGOs? This video shows how this can happen in a practical way in the four different conflicts examined.

#### **a) Wajir, Northern Kenya**

In Wajir district in Kenya's North Eastern Province, the majority of the population are nomadic pastoralists, herding animals for their livelihood. Because of the scarcity of rainfall in this part of Kenya, the pastoralists require extensive areas in which to move in search of pasture and water. Conflicts among the Wajir clans over the control and use of these scarce resources are unavoidable.

In 1991/92 a terrible drought hit the district and hundreds of people were displaced in the search for food. Exacerbating this situation was a huge influx of refugees from Ethiopia and Somalia, who were fleeing the political chaos there. Along with them, weapons and mercenary soldiers entered Wajir district.

In December 1992, following an election that changed the political balance in the district, fierce fighting erupted in several areas in Wajir. There was animal stock theft, highway robbery, looting of homesteads, destruction of businesses, rape of

women and children, injury and murder. By late 1993, almost no part of Wajir district was safe, and insecurity brought the normal activities to a halt. Local markets reflected the overall tension in the district. An initiative was started by concerned women to monitor the markets and to help resolve conflicts.

The Wajir Women's Association for Peace was born from the belief that although there are significant national and international components for the violence in Wajir, the conflict could be addressed locally since it had manifested itself locally. The women's committee was successful in stopping conflict in the market areas, and the women decided to take the initiative further and address those directly involved in the fighting. These were the elders and chiefs of the three major clans. This resulted in the founding of the Wajir Peace and Development Committee.

In order to legitimise the peace effort and weave together the existing community and government structures, the Wajir Peace and Development Committee became a part of the District Development Committee. It was very important to bring the government on board to ensure the necessary support for the peace effort.

One of the Government's plans was to expand the mainstream conventional system of government that dealt with security issues, to include opinion leaders, religious leaders, respected elders and other civil organisations to make an all-inclusive process. In order to gain the people's confidence, they thus included representatives that the people themselves could trust.

This process of peace building in Wajir has now been expanded. There are now Peace and Development Committees in 10 other districts. The office of the President is supporting this initiative and the District Commissioners have now been trained in peace building and conflict resolution mechanisms.

Although there are now tried and tested mechanisms in place to deal with violence in Wajir, the roots of the conflict still need to be addressed and resolved. The end of violence provides a window of opportunity to work towards doing this and thus achieving durable peace.

Peace here was achieved by reviving traditional methods of resolving conflict and bringing them together with the structures of the modern state. This blending of traditional and modern systems transformed the structures of peace building. It also takes into account the nature of Somali society where everyone has a part to play, both in conflict and its resolution.

## **b) Somaliland**

In 1991, after years of brutal civil war and oppressive dictatorial rule, the regime of President Siyaad Barre came to an end. In the aftermath of war, the country was devastated in more ways than one. Most of the infrastructure had been destroyed, with communications systems down and public buildings ransacked. A very high number of anti-tank and anti-personnel mines were either littered around or buried

under ground. As another legacy of the war, an enormous arsenal of heavy weapons and personal arms existed in the country, which now fell into the hands of hundreds and thousands of largely traumatised youth who began to pave the way to lawlessness. Acts of looting and senseless killings terrorised the population and led to a break-down of the economy.

The international community responded by setting up a multi-million dollar UN peace initiative called UNISOM, which did not succeed in establishing a sustainable peace. It then had to withdraw. It failed, in part, because it tried to re-structure society and mould the people and systems. The lesson UNISOM learned was that stability has to come from the people and the people have to decide.

The Northwest declared itself as the Republic of Somaliland. During the next 4 years, Somaliland underwent a series of inter-clan battles for control of resources and power. In order to end these struggles and achieve sustainable and lasting peace, the people of Somaliland went back to the traditional peace process. This process is based on including all the stakeholders in the debate and agreement on peace issues. Firstly, peace had to be established between the major clans in the north which divided into those who had supported the Barre regime and those who had fought against it. Once this was achieved, more conferences were held to manage inter-clan fighting.

This traditional approach to peace building takes into account the cultural make-up of the people. Part of this make-up is the need for total consensus by all parties involved in order to achieve any durable agreements. Any external assistance needs to recognise the sensitivity of the peacemaking process as well as the cultural framework around it. Ideally, assistance should supplement rather than overwhelm existing grassroots initiatives by being knowledgeable of the local situation and timely in its assistance.

There is a need to strengthen the capacities of local communities, of local NGOs and Community Based Organisations (CBOs). These organisations are closer to the people, especially those who are marginalised, people whom the international community can never reach. These people need to be encouraged, supported and be given a genuine partnership.

What remains for Somaliland to do is to consolidate and strengthen at all levels, the peace they have created, so that old grievances and hostilities are permanently laid to rest and a genuinely stable future achieved. Whether this is possible, in part, depends on other conflictual areas in the region finding their own peace.

### **c) Gulu, Northern Uganda**

The armed conflict between Government forces and the Lord's Resistance Army has been going on for over fifteen years. This area is home to the ethnic Acholi. Thousands of Acholi have lost their lives, while others have had to suffer repeated human rights abuses by both government troops and the rebels, including rape,

torture and abduction. The LRA uses child abduction as their main method of recruitment. Since 1994, up to 10,000 Acholi children have been kidnapped.

The abducted children are put through sadistic initiations to break down resistance to the LRA. They are often forced to kill. Girls over 13 are made into sex slaves. Nearly all female escapees are found to have sexually transmitted diseases, some have unwanted babies. More than 3,000 children have so far managed to escape from the LRA or were captured in battle by government troops. After debriefing at the army barracks, they are brought to one of two trauma centres in Gulu District where they participate in individual and group counselling.

The process of reintegrating the children back into society is very difficult. Most of the returnees will have committed serious crimes. In order for them to be re-accepted by their communities, traditional cleansing and reconciliation ceremonies are taking place. However as legally they would normally be classed as criminals, a new approach had to be found that allowed the traditional court system to be bypassed.

There is almost no family in this region that has not killed or had a family member killed. The court system is based on revenge and the death penalty, so if this system were used it would wipe out the Acholi people. The system does not bring about reconciliation, it just causes more wounds.

Acholi politicians lobbied hard for a blanket amnesty for returning LRA soldiers and this came into law. In theory, it is now possible for those who have killed to come home without being persecuted for what they have done. However, this has not yet happened.

This is, in part, due to lack of resources. The law says that these people should be demobilised and given a resettlement package. They should also be offered help in dealing with their trauma. But the funding for all this is not there. Offices have been established but people are unaware of what is required of them to take advantage of the amnesty.

Further lobbying is thus taking place for the necessary communication structures to be put in place so that the amnesty becomes better understood. It is hoped that eventually word will reach those who have been forced to make their life with the LRA and draw them out to re-join their families and communities. It remains to be seen whether the government and foreign donors will provide the Amnesty Commission with more resources for the re-integration of returning child soldiers, which would make a considerable contribution to peace building in Northern Uganda.

#### **d) Daveyton, South Africa**

During the years of Apartheid in South Africa, the majority of South Africans – Blacks, Coloured and Indians – were excluded from government, denied rights, and forced

to live separately from each other and the minority white community. The ruling National Party used the police and army in order to control these separate communities. The police force included some Blacks, Coloureds and Indians but mainly in lower ranks, and organised into groups with little or no training. These groups were often the ones who faced the anti-apartheid activists in confrontations with the community.

When the African National Congress (ANC) finally came to power in 1994, the new 'Government of National Unity' faced the huge task of building a new South Africa. Problems that had to be dealt with immediately included bridging the deep divisions between different groups of South Africans; divisions which the Apartheid rulers had been so careful to create. One part of this process was to try and establish a new relationship between the police and the community. At this time, the police force was seen as the enemy by most ordinary people.

In an attempt to foster accountability by all towards reducing crime, the new government implemented a law that meant that every police station in the country had to create a Community Police Forum (CPF). The CPF was a way of re-orienting the police force, away from enforcing apartheid's laws towards delivering a service that met the needs of the community.

The CPF in Daveyton tries to ensure that there is constant feedback from the people to the police and vice-versa. A network was established that tries to encompass the whole of the township. Since the establishment of the Forums, funding has become an issue. The initial government brief didn't mention how the groups were to be supported financially as it saw community policing as a voluntary type of activity.

The government recognised that the community had to be involved in some kind of self-policing. Activists within the community called meetings to encourage communities to participate and elect representatives who understand the problems of the area. Representatives were nominated, but because people had to do it in a voluntary capacity, there was a big turnover and thus a lack of continuity, which gave rise to frustration.

The Government thus undertook a community policing review. The Secretariat for Safety and Security talked to people, visited police stations and collected data on trends. This is informing policy that will shape the future of community policing for the next five years.

## **Conclusion**

Trying to change conflict situations at top level can only work up to a point. Peace building, if it is to be successful, cannot afford to ignore people at grassroots level. Unless the hearts and minds of ordinary people are involved in creating peace around them, conflicts cannot be resolved in any sustainable way. It remains a challenge for all engaged in peace building, whether in the international community, in regional government or in local communities to take on the voices coming from

the grassroots and incorporate them into policy making. The gap between practitioners and policy makers needs to be closed if much needed capacities for peace are to be strengthened.

## **2) Implications for Practitioners**

The following are some ideas concerning implications for practitioners. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list, simply the beginning of a debate.

- If grassroots initiatives are to be successful, it can be useful to get the government on board. This could involve joining government structures, setting up new joint structures or remaining separate with good communication between the two.
- If representatives from communities are to be elected or appointed to government or joint bodies, they must be people who are trusted by the community they are meant to represent.
- Training NGO, CBO and Government staff in Peace Building and Conflict Resolution/Transformation can be a useful way to deepen understanding of the conflict situation and build relationships between people.
- For peace building to be effective it needs to be based on traditional methods and approaches. Where traditional communities and the modern state apparatus need to work together, it can be very effective to combine traditional approaches and modern approaches.
- Where there is external involvement (by UN or INGOs), that involvement needs to be carried out in a sensitive way, which complements rather than overwhelms local resources.
- There can be a need to strengthen the local capacities of NGOs and CBOs to help them participate fully in the peace building process.
- Existing local systems, if based on revenge (even using a judicial system), can make the situation worse rather than better. There may be a need to seek new ways of dealing with problems, which aid the process of reconciliation. Amnesty for acts carried out during conflicts can be considered (see next section for possible discussion topic).
- If an amnesty is granted, then news of it, and any conditions attached, needs to be communicated to those who could benefit from it.
- If a policy of demobilisation and resettlement is to be carried out, then the programme needs to be properly resourced.
- If community members are expected to commit time to activities on behalf of their communities, then payment or some other kind of compensation may need to be considered.
- If initiatives are set up, it is important to review their effectiveness and carry out monitoring and research to inform future policy direction.

### 3) Using The Video With A Group

The following are some ideas about how the video could be used with a group. They are not meant to be prescriptive and facilitators are encouraged to use their own creativity in deciding how best to use the video.

- The video could be used with NGOs, CBOs, INGOs, Governments, and the United Nations.
- At least as long (and preferably longer) should be allowed to discuss the video as the video lasts (30 minutes).
- It could be used as part of a training programme, by an organisation internally for its own staff or as part of a meeting between practitioners and policy makers.
- It could be useful to give some background on the 4 conflicts to people before they watch it ( a 30 minute video with notes is available from RTC on each of the 4 conflicts if people would like more detail about one or more of the conflicts).
- If showing the video to a large group, one way of discussing it would be to divide the group in four and ask each group to focus on one of the conflicts, which they would discuss in small groups before coming together to share their reactions.
- People could be asked to focus on any similarities and differences they see between the conflicts portrayed and their own situation.
- People could be asked to think about how practitioners and policy makers, in their own situation, could work together more closely in the future.
- The video also raises some ethical issues, which, where appropriate, could be used to start a debate around the issue. One example is the issue of an amnesty for acts carried out during a violent conflict or war. In the example from Gulu, it was decided to grant a blanket amnesty. In South Africa, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission was set up, which offered immunity from prosecution to people who testified before the Commission, but where people who refused to testify could be prosecuted. In other conflicts (e.g., Rwanda, Serbia) a War Crimes Tribunal has been set up to prosecute people. So, an interesting discussion could be had around the issues of Amnesty, Truth, Mercy, Justice, Forgiveness, and Reconciliation. People could be asked to consider whether a blanket amnesty would be appropriate in their own situation or whether they believe that a blanket amnesty can never be justified. What way do people believe that reconciliation can best be achieved (if at all) in their own situation?

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**Responding to Conflict (RTC)** works internationally to provide practical capacity – building programmes in support of people working for peace, rights and sustainable development.

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