



comunidadsegura

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Paths toward peace

**Best practices in violence
reduction and development
in South and Southeast Asia**

Reducing Armed Violence the Asian Way

More than 740,000 people die as a result of armed violence every year – that's 1.5 people every minute. We are learning that it is the combination of many factors, rather than one alone, which increases the risk of violence breaking out.

It is also clear that the factors shaping armed violence are often the very same as the causes of underdevelopment: acute income and social inequality, chronic unemployment, uneven access to resources, unregulated urbanization, and various forms of marginalization.

More and more states are starting to make this connection between security and development. Since 2006, more than 100 countries have acknowledged these linkages by signing the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development and, in May of 2010, 61 states re-iterated their engagement by signing the Oslo Commitments on Armed Violence and the MDGs.

Civil society has a central role in this struggle to prevent and reduce armed violence. Community-based organizations and leaders have tremendous experience in supporting violence prevention programmes and projects at the local level. They are focusing not just on removing the tools of violence from circulation, but also on reshaping the motivations and means that give rise to violent behaviour.

Building on the first NGO consultations organized by the Quaker United Nations Office-Geneva in 2008 and 2009, and on civil-society meetings in Rio de Janeiro and Nairobi, the civil society session of the "Regional Best and Promising Practices Seminar on Armed Violence Reduction and Prevention in South and Southeast Asia", took place in Kathmandu, on March 15, 2011.

It gathered civil society practitioners directly involved in the design and implementation of AV&D work. The aim was to highlight evidence of good practices in AV&D programming as part of the preparation for the 2nd Ministerial Review Conference of the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development in late October 2011 (see www.genevadeclaration.org) and to foster the development of a sub-regional community of practice on AV&D.

This Comunidad Segura "Good Practices" magazine, in addition to highlighting the work of the selected organizations, aims to serve as a source of information on grassroots initiatives that can help to inform advocacy campaigns and national and international public policy and programming.

Ilona Szabo de Carvalho

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Asia's Armed Violence

TIME BOMB

The incidence of armed violence across South and Southeast Asia shows indications of worsening. With between 40 and 60 percent of their populations under age 30, these regions are routinely described as “ticking time bombs”. From Afghanistan to Vietnam, politicians have been quick to seize control over unemployed youth and mobilize them for personal and political gain. The corrosive effects of patronage politics and institutional corruption are making a bad situation worse.

The risks of escalating armed violence are manifold. According to the Small Arms Survey and the UN Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC), a considerable proportion of the world’s estimated 850 million small arms and light weapons in circulation are located in these regions. This is hardly surprising since in many societies the possession of firearms is fundamental to local notions of manhood and social status, and in some places is seen as necessary to defending personal property and guaranteeing basic services.

Important efforts are underway to reverse these trends. In Nepal, a handful of senior police officers made impressive efforts to crack down on violent crime, serving as role models to police across the region. Since 2007, the Nepali government has promoted positive discrimination for women in parliament and the public

service, including the army and police. To confront gender and sexual violence, the country also opened up women’s cells within police stations. Across the country, community groups have set up micro-credit and income generation schemes for young widows, including those affected by the country’s civil war (1996—2006).

In Afghanistan and Pakistan, despite protracted conflicts between soldiers, insurgents and clans, development workers have harnessed local community structures to promote peace and co-existence. Culturally-sensitive public safety radio campaigns are also popular in both countries.

In the Philippines, military commanders brokered peace deals with opposing clans, reversing the social marginalization of populations hosting militia groups. Likewise, in Bangladesh, rapid-reaction battalions are deterring crime in communities across the country, while local organizations are promoting for at-risk groups in the capital’s slums. In virtually all SAARC and ASEAN countries, local organizations are launching campaigns to raise awareness about the risks of armed violence.

Activists debated the costs, causes and responses to armed violence at a seminar in Nepal (March 16-18, 2010). The event was organized by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament

in Asia and the Pacific and the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development—a multilateral initiative launched in 2006 that commits states to measurable reductions in armed violence by 2015. Supported by the Swiss government, the event brought together governments, international organizations, civil society, policy-makers, activists, and scholars from across the SAARC and ASIAN regions. Their goal was to call attention to the human toll of armed violence and to explore effective options for prevention and reduction.

The Nepal seminar demonstrated that while local action to prevent armed violence across South and Southeast Asia is heating-up, high-level political action is still glacial. Only eight of 18 countries throughout the region – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Nepal and Thailand - have signed the Geneva Declaration. But if promising practices across the region are going to expand, more countries need to get on-board with a higher level of political commitment.

Country:
India

Organization:
Small Arms Survey

Robert Muggah

Research Director, Small Arms Survey

Subindra Bogati

Coordinator, Nepal Armed Violence Assessment

Bringing Women Out of Isolation

Women's Groups Are a Vital Tool for Economic and Social Empowerment

By Shoba Shrestha

Gender-based income inequality is present in all parts of Nepal; many studies reveal that it is one of the major causes behind gender inequality. There is evidence that when women improve economically they are in a better position to secure their own and

others' rights, and their status in the family and society is recognized. Economic empowerment promotes the self reliance and self confidence of women.

One of the major strategies adopted by Women for Peace and Democracy (WPD) Nepal is to focus on empowering women and socially excluded groups economically by forming them into groups, and providing necessary skills and

training as well as connections to credit services and markets. The organization promotes development based on gender equity and equality, free of injustice and violence against women.

WPD has three major strategies: the socioeconomic empowerment of marginalized women, the political representation of women at the local level, and advocacy and awareness. In order to improve the

Country:
Nepal

Organization:
Women for Peace
and Democracy
(WPD)



Photos: WPD Nepal and Comunidad Segura.

socioeconomic status of women, since they are the most vulnerable in Nepalese society due to illiteracy, economic dependence and lack of awareness, WPD Nepal is implementing the “Socioeconomic Empowerment Program for Women and Marginalized”, one of its most important programs.

The socioeconomic program offers training in various areas, such as reading, writing and economic literacy; the development and management of organizations; organic vegetable farming; and vocational training. The women’s groups receive small grants for income generating activities. They meet monthly as a group and periodically with all local stakeholders, which include members of the district development office, the police, the health sector, schools and universities, civil society, and the media.

WPD believes economic development brings women out of the margins of society and into the mainstream. It encourages the



use of local technology, expertise and resources to alleviate poverty through community participation.

The women’s groups have been formed through the principle of social inclusion, identifying and selecting women who are marginalized and in need, while also including a few well-off families from the target communities. Our experience suggests it is best to not exclude any neighboring family in light of their social, economic, racial background or any other reason.

By including a few elite or well-off families in the group they can become an asset, helping development by providing their coordination and support to group activities, as well as to their fellow group members. Its also encourages

a feeling of uniformity among all members and reduces many forms of discrimination.

Success depends on the strength and motivation found among those groups. We have found that working with groups rather than with individuals is more effective in terms of conducting training sessions, organizing events, and more importantly, working together as equals regardless of economic and other backgrounds. They all unite, share, discuss, and have the same voice.

We have adopted as our main principles: the broad engagement of the community members in all project activities, decentralization and improved local accountability and decision making, the consideration of the needs and demands of women and socially excluded groups, the prevention of negative social consequences and negative environmental impacts through appropriate project activities, and enhancing the appropriate management of natural resources.



Strengthening Community Ties Through Human Rights Education

INTERVIEW / Shobha Gautam

For the last three years, the Institute of Human Rights Communication Nepal, IHRICON has been providing training in human rights to security forces in Nepal. Visiting half a dozen different locations in Nepal each year, it has reached more than one-hundred combatants, including members of the national armed forces, the police forces and non-state Maoist forces.

Country:
Nepal

Organization:
Institute of Human Rights Communication Nepal (IHRICON)

In this exclusive interview with human rights, peace and security activist Shobha Gautam, founder and head of IHRICON, the journalist describes her work of introducing human rights concepts and training in rural areas in Nepal. Her key message is the need to protect women and children in conflict. Her work with women volunteers for peace included publishing 'wall newspapers', a form of community reporting in which news stories are pasted on a village wall, which in this case helped to expose domestic violence in rural communities. Gautam notes that this strategy helped to lower incidences of

violence by making them public.

In her work with security forces, Gautam described adopting strategies based on creativity and caution, stressing the importance of the message and not risking the lives of those involved by precipitating a sudden clash between the forces. Gautam says that the training was successful not only in introducing the human rights content, but she also reports that "...now security forces have a positive opinion of human rights activists and journalists." She also notes that having members of security forces sit together for training contributes to improved relations across different levels of the military hierarchy, and that her work has been received by donor and international organizations "...with enthusiasm and encouragement".



What do the women peace volunteers do?

The women peace volunteers faced many challenges. The most difficult work was responding to the kidnappings of innocent villagers. We had to contact both alternately the army and the non-state forces to ask why arrests and kidnappings happened and eventually engaged in long negotiations for the safe return of these victims, people caught in the conflict, back to their homes. The women peace volunteers also publish one edition of a wall newspaper every month reporting on local events and good practices in the community. This was a source of interest especially to illiterate women in the community, who would ask that their stories be told.

What role did the newspaper have in improving security?

Our wall newspaper published a long story on the many forms of domestic violence, focusing especially on violence against women and alcohol abuse. This caught the interest of the residents and many came to report cases of such violence, increasing transparency in the community. We have been told that this has helped reduce the incidences of violence and alcoholism.

How do you introduce human rights training to security forces?

Reaching the armed forces and the non-state forces was a very difficult

and challenging task for us. With the army, we first invited them to meet outside their barracks, without their fatigues, dressed in civilian clothes. It was a way to help them internalize what civil society can do, and to help them reflect on the role of the army. After that, we also conducted training with the non-state forces, and had to resolve a very sensitive situation. We were obliged, for example, to inform the army of our movements, while we did not want to risk it following us and killing us. Once the non-state forces were contacted, we had to conduct training sessions in two or three days at a time, living in their villages. It was difficult, but when they realized the importance of the concepts, they welcomed us.

CONFRONTING A SENSITIVE ISSUE: Disarmament in Pakistan

SPADO, the Islamabad, Pakistan-based Sustainable Peace and Development Organization, aims to reverse the country's alarming small-arms proliferation. Founded in 2001, SPADO researches and lobbies for reductions in gun violence, trains communities in nonviolence, and works with religious authorities on changing perceptions of Islam as it relates to peace and violence.

The organization is the official contact for International Campaign To Ban Landmines (ICBL) and Cluster Munitions Coalition (CMC) in Pakistan. "We are working to convince the government to act in a more appropriate way, and are addressing youth, religious organizations and civil society to decrease gun violence," says Raza Shah Khan, SPADO's executive director. An active full member of

the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA), the organization has collected 150,000 signatures to date to denounce gun culture and "show that investing in arms won't help to create peace in the region." In addition to campaigning for a reduction in gun violence in Pakistan, SPADO is also lobbying for that goal to be added to the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals.

Working with international partners like the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), SPADO has developed a network of conflict-resolution facilitators in Pakistan. In the first phase, facilitators trained 40 community leaders from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) in conflict analysis, mediation, and advance negotiation skills. SPADO also



engages Pashtun communities along the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan in peace building initiatives.

The organization is also focused on small arms control and curbing violence related to religion. "We see that religion is mostly misused to promote hate and violence across the globe—especially in Pakistan. Religion could be used for peace," says

Kahn. Kahn and his coordinators coproduce publications related to disarmament and coexistence with Islamic religious leaders "... to promote peace and nonviolence. "Working in Pakistan, Khan said, remains a challenge. "Addressing issues of peace and disarmament is very sensitive. When you talk about peace you are a target."

Country:
Pakistan
Organization:
Sustainable
Peace and
Development
Organization
(SPADO)



Photos: SPADO.



Restorative Justice in Police Stations

INTERVIEW / Ali Gohar

For many Pakistanis, police stations are no longer threatening. Their doors are open not just for reporting crimes, but for those seeking to resolve disputes and find counsel. Ali Gohar, the founder of Just Peace International, introduced traditional conflict resolution practices and human rights concerns in police stations in Pakistan over the past few years. "I have modernized an ancient tradition," he told

Comunidad Segura.

Gohar opened offices for elders with good standing

in the community in police stations, to foster restorative justice practices. The Dispute Resolution program provides human rights training for elders and for police officers, it educates women to form their own parallel councils. The program is careful not to overstep the boundaries of the judiciary: "In our language the term for justice in court is *adal*. What we do is *Muslahath*, which in our language means 'to make a wrong right'."

What is innovative about the Dispute Resolution Project?

The Dispute Resolution project in Khyber Pukhtoon Khwa Province involved opening offices for elders inside police stations and training them and the police in alternative dispute resolution, our traditional *Jirga* system and in restorative justice. It included resolving cases in police stations without the interference of the police or the courts. The Diversion project similarly diverts youths from entering the justice system, with the goal of rehabilitating them.

How many people does it reach?

The project covered the districts of the SWAT, the Upper DIR, Lower Dir and we are now working in also at the District Buner. In Khyber Pukhtoonkhwa we introduced the project in 130 of the total 214 police stations in the province. It covers the whole population under each participating police district, and takes on every issue for resolution, ranging from minor offences to murder cases.

The Dispute Resolution project takes elders inside police stations. How does that happen?

We open offices for elders at each police station, establishing the *Muslahath* Committees. We train committee members and police officers in conflict transformation, peace building, restorative justice and *Jirga* (traditional practices), to make sure both the elders and the police receive the same message.

How do you choose the elders?

We chose people with good reputation. Since the police know the communities well, elder's records are verified by the police intelligence agencies and their track records are selected by the high police officials. Then intelligence agencies verified them and referred us for training.

How does it involve conflict transformation and restorative justice?

We teach all methods of peace building. The common practice is

Arbitration, but we try to change it to Mediation and Restorative Justice. Since *Jirga* system is 5000 years old and traditionally dispenses punishment to offenders, we try to update it by including restorative elements, and bringing it closer to modern human rights values.

We train committee members and police officers in conflict transformation, peace building, restorative justice and *Jirga* to make sure both the elders and the police receive the same message.

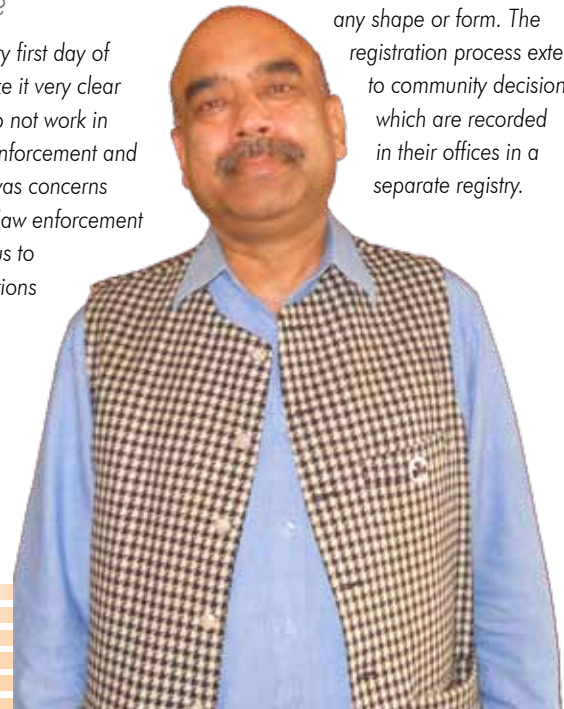


role and have always referred cases of minor offenses to them. The community also trusts the MC's, and has brought them murder cases, cases taken from the courts and referred to MC's for reconciliation. So the MC's role is to support to the government structure.

How does the project support women, children, and youths?

We trained women separately and linked their association to the MC. Now every case is registered in the MC office at a police station. The project has also significantly reduced the sense of insecurity and even fear people have of police stations. The Thana (police station) culture in the past was associated with exploiting women, children and the poor, so their elders at these stations serve as checks on the police. Similarly, the police also prevent Jirga members from violating human rights in any shape or form. The registration process extends to community decisions which are recorded in their offices in a separate registry.

to community decisions which are recorded in their offices in a separate registry.



What is its contribution to reducing conflict?

Due to the prolonged, expensive, corrupt and win/lose character and situation of the criminal justice system in Pakistan, decisions taken in the court system result in hostility and enmity for years, more violence and deaths. One of the best aspects of the MC is that they resolve, reconcile, rehabilitate and follow up on the parties until full-fledged friendly, brotherly relationships are established, and enmities end once for all.

Are the Muslahath Committees a "modernized version" of the Jirga?

Muslahath in our language means to make wrongs right, they are a new version of the Jirga. The Jirga followed traditional practices, their decisions were verbal, women were not allowed to participate. In contrast, MC decisions are taken according to modern scientific principles of conflict transformation, peace building, and

restorative justice. Every decision is written down and registered. Women's committees are also formed and linked to the male committees.

Is there a risk that the MC's will compete with the police or the justice system?

No, from the very first day of training, we make it very clear that the MC's do not work in parallel to law enforcement and the judiciary. It was concerns with the current law enforcement system that led us to develop connections between the police and the community, and to decrease the burden on the judiciary. The police and the judiciary are very happy with the MC's positive

Putting Children First to Reduce Violence and Crime

The first step toward improving security, according to Syed Tamjidur Rahman is to look after children and youth in a community. Tamjid,



head of Bangladesh's chapter of the civil society organization ChangeMaker, took a Community Safety and Security project to

Country:
Bangladesh
Organization:
ChangeMaker
Bangladesh

Kamrangirchar, a densely populated low-income community in Dakhar that is home to nearly a million people, most of them

migrants from the rural areas of Bangladesh.

Kamrangirchar has no access to basic services, no sanitation, medical care, policing or school

system, and it is marked by insecurity. "This leads to different crimes and violence in the area: drugs, child trafficking, prostitution, gun running, extortion, and so on. When we surveyed residents asking what their most pressing concerns were, and they cited childcare, insecurity and youth unemployment," said Tamjid.

According to Tamjid, migrants are lured to the capital city in search of money, are unskilled and facing a lack of jobs and high cost of living, and become easy prey for criminals. Child kidnapping is a big problem. ChangeMaker's project took these issues into account when it considered how to approach locals:

"The crime situation created a very precarious environment, which further strained by the presence of organized crime. We looked for a smooth, less sensitive entry point. Since child trafficking, kidnapping, and sexual abuse are quite common, the community suggested we begin by addressing child care. After one year, we have started to work on crime monitoring and security issues," said Tamjid.

ChangeMaker has three projects underway in Kamrangirchar. The Child Safety Center, is a day care center for young children ages three to eight that allows parents to work full time in town and pick

up their children after work. Initially planned for 15 children, the center currently cares for 50 children, with 75 children on the waiting list. "A committee made up of members of the community helped us resolve the Center's management issues such as fees, the criteria for child admission, food, health care, educational and recreational facilities. This is how we set a fee of 10 Taka per-child per-day, which the families accepted gladly. The project offers direct support by providing facilities, food, education, healthcare and entertainment," said Tamjid.

Children spend 10 hours at the center, they have breakfast, a mid-day meal, evening snacks, and a safe shelter. They receive weekly visits from a medical practitioner, and their activities include drawing and singing. The project also introduces children to Unicef's





educational cartoon Meena. Meena represents little girls in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and Nepal, dealing with serious concerns in the region such as education, early marriage, unequal food and work load, while also telling entertaining stories.

According to ChangeMaker, with their children in day care, participating families are able to work more, and have since doubled their incomes. The parents, who typically earn their livings as housemaids, rickshaw drivers, garment workers, or as day laborers, cannot afford the going rate for day care. "This makes it quite a challenge to run a center on a fully commercial basis; we also lack the local resources. On the other hand, the families are interested in learning how to run a low-cost child care center; and the challenge now is to mobilize local resources, in cash, in kind and in time, and contact private

enterprises," said Tamjid.

A second ChangeMaker initiative in the community is the information technology training center. "The ICT center is managed by local youth, we have trained them to in skills necessary to operate and manage center. We have developed the primary resources with the aid of locals, youths teach and help others with very little assistance from us," said Tamjid. Currently there are 25 youths engaged in the center. The center also serves the community in general, according to ChangeMaker.

"We placed 50 youths directly in the job market, making connections with the private sector. We estimate about 100 youths have also found jobs by visiting the center at one time or another through our notice boards, or help with writing their CVs," said Tamjid.

A third project trains young people to monitor community

safety. Young men and women are taught community development and life skills, and invited to work as volunteers helping report crimes and creating a liaison with the police. "The primary goal of the project is to make young people feel a sense of responsibility towards their community. By reporting on crimes they realize the extent of damage caused by various types of crimes, and how it affects them. The process also helps them understand it is best to stay away from crime and violence," said Tamjid.

Young people carry out a local survey, getting details of up to 18 different types of offenses. They issue quarterly crime reports to the local stakeholders so that the police and other local authorities can take appropriate action and focus on issues that are more important to the community.

THE INDIAN ARMED VIOLENCE ASSESSMENT: Shifting Priorities and Elevating Debate

By **Aaron Karp and Sonal Marwah**

The 2011 Indian census shows the country has 1.21 billion people, one-sixth the world's population. On route to becoming the world's most populous country by 2030 it is far from the world's most violent. Even so, the costs of violence are considerable: approximately

33,000 to 38,000 Indians die violently each year, a little less than five per cent of all violent deaths worldwide. While crime appears to be

declining in India as in much of the world, political, caste and religious violence and crimes against women, as well as terrorism and insurgency, are very real.

In India, official and popular perceptions of violence are informed by a preoccupation with military threats to the state. Spectacular events such as the Mumbai terrorist attacks of November 2008 and the spread of Maoists insurgencies have consolidated national security priorities exclusively around containing terrorism and insurgency. Yet these threats cause no more than 5 to 10 per cent of all violent deaths in the country. In 2009, the most recent year for

which reliable data is available, there were 32,369 homicide victims compared to just 2,231 deaths linked to terrorism and insurgency in India.

It is true that violence in India is directly influenced by problems spilling over from neighboring countries, including terrorism, separatism and illicit arms trafficking. Many of India's neighbors are either plagued with armed conflicts – as Afghanistan, Pakistan and Myanmar – or emerging from a two-decade long conflict, as Sri Lanka. Yet despite these challenges, regional efforts to prevent and reduce armed violence have been surprisingly meek. Few from the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) have signed-up to the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development, a global platform to promote measurable improvements in security. In fact, just three – Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Nepal – have signed the Declaration leaving five that have not.

Even so, other factors shaping armed violence can be traced to domestic challenges, including gender-based aggression, organized crime and drug trafficking, political intimidation, caste violence, communal tensions, regional separatist movements and

a home-grown Maoist rebellion. These are not insignificant challenges: the Maoist insurgency has spread to one-third of the country. Meanwhile, some of the most extreme violence in India is concentrated in particular cities – including the national capital of New Delhi – as well as the country's northern states.

In 2010, the Small Arms Survey launched the Indian Armed Violence Assessment (IAVA) to develop a comprehensive evidence base on external and internal forms of violence in the country. It intends to initiate a dialogue that widens the understanding of armed violence, brings together leading experts to review the many causes and consequences of insecurity and build networks of policy makers and practitioners to thicken the evidence base. The project leaves no doubt that India has the capacity to reduce armed violence, and can expand its vision to encompass the full dimensions of human security and development.

Aaron Karp is Senior Lecturer in Political Science at Old Dominion University in Virginia, United States, and Project Manager of the Indian Armed Violence Assessment (IAVA) and Sonal Marwah is the Project Researcher and Coordinator, located in Delhi, India. The IAVA maps patterns and trends through evidence based research. Its publications will begin to appear later in 2011, in both, Hindi and English.

Country:
India

Actors:
Indian Armed
Violence
Assessment
(IAVA)

Map India



IDP's and Demobilized Combatants: To Ensure Peace, No One Must Be Left Behind

By Razia Sultana

Intra-state conflicts, particularly those along ethnic divisions remain the predominant threat to peace. On December 2, 1997, the government of Bangladesh and the Parbattya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samiti (PCJSS)* signed the Peace Accord on Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), to end the country's long-standing ethnic conflict.

Peace agreements usually include: cease-fires, demobilization of insurgent forces; rehabilitation of refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and demobilized insurgents; and the resolution of disputes over land ownership, particularly in tribal areas. The CHT accord, one of the

Country:
Bangladesh

Organization:
Bangladesh
Institute of
International
and Strategic
Studies

most promising peace agreements in South Asia, faced difficult challenges in implementation. Dissent within the political parties, opposition and hostile activities within tribal communities, and clashes between the PCJSS supporters and new anti-Accord tribal forces resulted in casualties.

The process of post-conflict peace building is rife with uncertainty and the risk of relapse. Ominously, resources are scarce and divided among women

and children of different ethnic backgrounds. BISS, with the assistance of European Union (EU) and DFID (the UK Department for International Development), launched a project to maintain post-conflict peace by focusing on armed violence in 2009.

The project focused mainly on demobilized insurgents, Chittagong mainland tribal refugees, and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). It aimed to prevent conflict and violence through participatory educational programs, community consultation, and workshops for tribal women and youth, Bengali settlers and various conflicting groups.

The ultimate goal remains to ensure sustainable peace between and among the feuding parties; the project focuses on implementing peace agreements and responding to human security concerns in the process. BISS also organized community-based rehabilitation programs and initiatives to resolve land disputes, while preserving social harmony, ecological balance and respect for tribal traditions. It helped to reduce competition over scarce resources between different tribal groups, youths and women, while also democratically increasing the involvement of NGOs. All

project phases were participatory, strengths-based, context-specific, gendered, and sustainable.

The rehabilitation of demobilized insurgents is difficult and time-consuming. CHT insurgents are no exception. Healing emotional and psychological scars of war and returning to normal life remains challenging. Insurgent and refugee rehabilitation is virtually complete, but restoring socio-economic life will take longer.

Rehabilitating Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) is more difficult. Members of 128,364 families, including 38,156 Bengali families, have been identified as IDPs. The rather vexing issue of land ownership has virtually stalled their rehabilitation. Most of the Bengalis were settled in CHT Khas land (government owned land), a large part of which tribal people regard as their communal land. The diverse, multi-lingual community with limited social, economic, and community resources have hesitated to participate given sensitive nature of the issue.

* Parbattya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samiti (PCJSS) is a political party formed to represent the people and indigenous tribes of the Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh. Since its inception in 1973, the PCJSS has fought for autonomy and the recognition of the ethnic identity and rights of the indigenous tribes of the Hill Tracts.

Peace

Constructive Engagement and Building Credibility Over Years

Nonviolence International Southeast Asia (NISEA) was founded in 1992, with the aim of increasing awareness and appreciation for nonviolence, empowering communities to participate in peace processes, and to create an international network of individuals seeking to reform “unjust structures institutions, policies, and laws.” Another organization, the South-South Network on Non-State Armed Group Engagement (SSN) provides support to international efforts to engage non-state armed groups (NSAGs), while respecting human rights and fostering development, emphasizing the importance of bringing a “Southern” perspective

to peace talks. Alfredo (Fred) Ferrariz Lubang is the Regional Representative of Nonviolence International and the secretary-general for SSN (South-South Network on Non-State Armed Group Engagement). A lecturer at at Chulalongkorn University and Mahidol University in Thailand, and at Hiroshima University in Japan, Lubang is a member of the Advisory Board of 1997 Nobel Peace Prize laureate, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines. He spoke with Comunidad Segura about dialogue with non-state actors:

Country:
The Philippines

Actors:
Nonviolence International Southeast Asia

“Nonviolence International gathers, studies and promote more effective approaches and tools to more constructively engage non-state armed groups. We believe there is more we can do than resort to military means. We believe in dialogue, with a Southern perspective. Alternative approaches can embrace human rights and international humanitarian law, and even concepts of reduction of armed violence.

Working with local NGOs, we directly engage with armed groups. We visit their camps, we talk with their leaders, and engage them in discussions. One of our greatest achievements is convincing them not to use landmines in their warfare. We have also developed child protection policies within their groups.

In the Philippines we have successfully engaged armed groups, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front,

and the government to clear land of UXOs [Unexploded ordnances] and landmines. We have been tasked with leading this process; we are working with the government, armed groups, and the mining agency to collaborate on cleaning up UXO and landmines. They’re jointly cleaning up their mess.

You build credibility with the government and armed group over the course of years. You gain their confidence, after engaging them on these issues for years. By being there, being impartial, and really, in this particular issue [of landmines], by focusing on the humanitarian issue.

This partnership is part of a peace agreement, which was signed by all parties and was a two-year process. The big challenge

is about funds, resources. Peace agreements should be supported with resources. Implementing peace agreements are often the reason behind new waves of armed violence. Failed peace agreements can form new armed groups, because people pin their hopes on peace agreements. You have to make peace agreements work. It’s not just up to the government and armed groups. You have to involve civil society as impartial, credible institutions [in the process], hopefully with participation from the international community.”



SIMULATING Post-Conflict Reconstruction

Swaran Singh

The *University for Peace*, in San José, Costa Rica was founded in 1980 as part of a United Nations International Agreement. The university was founded to provide, an: “innovative programme of education, training and research for peace – focused on key issues, including conflict-prevention, human security, human rights, environmental security and post-conflict rehabilitation.” One of the leaders at that university is Swaran Singh. In Spring 2009, the visiting professor developed an outline for Sri Lankan peace agreements

with students at UPEACE. In addition to his role at UPEACE, Prof. Singh is Chairman of the Center for International Politics, Organisation and Disarmament (CIPOD) at the School of International Studies (SIS) at Jawaharlal Nehru University (New Delhi). He is also President of the Association of Asia Scholars (an Asia-Wide Network with its Secretariat in Delhi) and General Secretary of Indian Association of Asian & Pacific Studies, and Mentor at Center for Conflict Resolution & Human Security (New Delhi).

Because war is a product of the minds of men and women, it is in the minds of these men and women that we must approach the subject. Increasing magnitude and awareness about armed violence around the world has been therefore responded to by multiple initiatives including expansion of peace and

conflict studies in various think tanks and universities.

I am fortunate to be attached to some of these institutions, especially to the University of Peace (UPEACE) based in San José in Costa Rica – the first and the only country to disband armed forces and to

set up a ministry for peace and reconstruction.

My exposure to peace studies has led to a conviction that most violence results from individual reactions to a given conflict. I believe education and training can eliminate much of armed violence in society.

In March 2009, when the Sri Lankan government launched a war against insurgents representing the ethnic minority of Tamils, I was teaching a graduate-level course on “Peace-building and Reconstruction” at UPEACE. In my class were 22 students representing 19 countries. Most of these students had worked in related areas in their respective

governments and civil societies before coming to UPEACE. This class also had four teacher-students who had been teaching peace and conflict studies in their own institutions. UPEACE not only provides a robust environment for support but also opportunities for experimenting with new initiatives.

My class included two students from Sri Lanka – which was a live issue as I was teaching. One belonged to the majority Sinhala ruling class and the other to the minority Tamil. The former’s parents were part of the national government and the Tamil student

The participants demonstrated more polish and restraint than one sees in real inter-State negotiations.

Country:
India

Organization:
Jawaharlal
Nehru University

was a teacher who was active in civil society initiatives. We brainstormed post-conflict reconstruction options as the conflict appeared to be moving toward the Tamil insurgency's defeat.

What made the exercise especially stimulating was that that I, the moderator, did not have to fictionalize any scenarios. The fact that these scenarios were happening at the same time made the class especially engaging and interesting, producing amazing and unprecedented results.

The half-day conference that concluded this three-week anonymous role-playing simulation exercise was attended by UPEACE leadership, and produced an impressive detailed ceasefire and reconstruction agreement between the so-called State of Sri Lanka and the Supreme Council representing the Tamils and Muslims of Sri Lanka.

The most visible outcomes of this simulation exercise at UPEACE in March 2009 were: (a) that all participants maintained strict secrecy about their identities until they were revealed in the concluding conference, (b) each participant worked arduously to grasp the role he/she was playing, meaning extensive reading and consultations, (c) there were few personal tensions, and the participants demonstrated more

polish and restraint than one sees in real inter-State negotiations, and (d) it produced one of the most detailed agreement with specific provision in various sector, issues and concerns.

The UPEACE leadership confirmed that this was the first time that such an intensive simulation exercise occurred on their campus. Most of these students are now working across the globe, but they write to me repeatedly relating how they are tackling their current assignments with what they learned while they participated in this simulation exercise.

Simulations, as we know, allow participants to self-train, self-teach, and self-perfect their skills (with the help of trained moderator) in the art of negotiations in their given specialized field – in this case, post-conflict reconstruction. They have

the opportunity to learn from their mistakes, with limited historical, institutional and ideological baggage. Simulation exercises encourage free-thinking and innovative

approaches in tackling intractable and persisting conflicts whereas, in real life, ceasefires are known to collapse on a global average of about five years.

I always strongly recommend simulation exercises for developing coordination among multi-sectoral

and multivariate actors in the field of peacebuilding. Such exercises are particularly useful for civil society and non-government organization networks where protagonists are seldom trained in the art of negotiations in order to push their

agenda with minimum costs. Peacebuilding simulation exercises are equally useful for training field workers as they confront real time situations in which they

have to respond on-the-spot and do not have the luxury of making wrong decisions. The costs of mistakes are normally very high.

Education and training can eliminate much of armed violence in society.

Swaran Singh is Professor for Diplomacy & Disarmament at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, India.

Simulations allow participants to self-train, self-teach, and self-perfect their skills in the art of negotiations.



Regional Best and Promising Practices Seminar on Armed Violence Reduction and Prevention in South and Southeast Asia

Kathmandu, Nepal, 15 March 2011

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**In the two previous issues,
the Comunidad Segura Magazine
featured good practices from Civil Society
Organizations that participated in regional meetings on
Armed Violence and Development in Latin America and in East Africa,
as part of the preparations for the 2nd Ministerial Review Conference of the
Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development in late October 2011.
This is the third issue of the series, developed together with participants of
the “Regional Seminar on Armed Violence and Development in South and
Southeast Asia” held in Kathmandu, Nepal, March 2011. Enjoy reading the
stories as sources of inspiration and reflection on armed violence
prevention, conflict resolution, post conflict reconstruction
and promoting livelihoods and development in
the region.**



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