

This Winter issue of the CCTS newsletter is devoted to our fourth and final seminar on post-conflict peacebuilding. It contains the paper by Sarah Crowther on which the seminar was based and, starting on page 13, a report of the seminar itself. We hope that you find it useful.

The Role of NGOs, Local and International, in Post-war Peacebuilding

A discussion paper by Sarah Crowther

Asking about what role Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) could play in peacebuilding implies a faith that NGOs do have a role to play. In this paper I wish to start from fundamental questions, asking about the terms and justification for the whole debate surrounding NGOs, asking what is needed to build peace, and putting these together to look at NGOs' 'role'. Having identified situations where NGOs can offer a contribution to peacebuilding, I can ask what role international funders, including INGOs can have in facilitating peacebuilding through support for NGOs.

I have never studied or experienced war or violent conflict. I know something of social conflict between interested parties on a local or micro scale. I know something about local groups, community-based organisations, and NGOs in development work and debates. From this basis, as a newcomer to conflict transformation, I aim to offer a logical flow of questions that people with experience and greater knowledge of post-war peacebuilding can answer for themselves. I look forward to improving with the benefit of people's criticisms and insights. I start with concepts – NGO, CBO, civil society – then address the distinctive differences between NGOs and some other comparable structures that could contribute to different phases of post war peacebuilding.

The range of terms and meanings relating to activity and social or political structures outside Government can be a hurdle to constructive debate.

By '**non-government organisations**' (NGOs) I mean formal organisations of people who are engaged in activities that are not primarily for their own benefit. The term 'NGO' defines such bodies in direct relation and contrast to Governments, but what are the analytical differences between a Government-body and an NGO? According to Weber, Government has ultimate recourse to legitimate coercive force to tax and enforce regulation of people's and other organisations' activities. NGOs rely on willingness from local people to co-operate with the NGOs activities. When referring to international NGOs (INGOs) I mean those NGOs where the senior staff originate from other countries. In research in the mid-1990's Wallace et al found that local NGOs did not differentiate between INGO and multi-lateral or bi-lateral funders, finding the nature of the relationship largely indistinguishable (Wallace et al 1997).

I will also refer to '**community-based organisations**' (CBOs), by which I mean groups of people who know each other and are co-ordinating their activities in some organised way for mutual or reciprocal gain. CBOs may be formally or informally organised. Members are driven by subjective interests, and the extent of organised activities and numbers and individuals participating will vary over time as the situations they face change.

Both NGOs and CBOs are agencies for local activities, including potential to contribute to peacebuilding, set up by interested parties. Being interested does not necessarily imply actors involved are self-interested, but simply that they have a set of concerns, priorities and beliefs that

underpin the intention behind their actions. Esman and Uphoff have considered many forms of local institution as potential development agencies, 'ranging from local government bodies to rural enterprises' (Esman and Uphoff 1984:18). People's movements, membership organisations and market organisations such as co-operatives or trade unions are also seen as 'crucial intermediaries in development'.

All these definitions can be challenged but they will serve adequately for now.

Civil society

The background papers relating to this paper set it within the theme of *civil society*. The current use of the term 'civil society' often bothers me. It is usually poorly defined and applied, often with little critical analysis, in many different and incompatible ways. The ancient Greeks started the discussion, and Van Rooy (1998) traces a shift from academic and political debates in the nineteenth century, in which civil society was considered as a notion that compared favourably to Hobbes' visions of the essential savagery of human nature, to twentieth century understanding in which civil society is defined in relation to and integral to a democratic state. She traces six distinct uses of the concept of 'civil society' by the aid industry at present:

- 1) value (value and norms, the culture reinforcing virtues of a civilised society)
- 2) collective noun (a label for organisations not set up by, nor mandated by the state, nor of the market)
- 3) space (arenas for creating new action, new forms of association)
- 4) a historical moment (a time, mostly in the past, when a set of 'pre-requisites' of individual, right-bearing social rules and norms of morality existed)
- 5) anti-hegemony (movements disengaged from state, building solidarity on their own terms, especially as a moral movement where the state is associated with Western capitalism and where civil society is thus a social and political structure distinct from capitalist government)

It is only in recent debates emerging largely from the United States, that civil society has been seen as a separate alternative to the state, existing essentially in opposition to the state (van Rooy 1998:6), though still largely defined in relation to it, thus van Rooy's sixth use, of civil society as:

- 6) anti-state (antidote or opposition to centralised or autocratic state).

In current debates about 'civil society' in development policy the term seems to have become a label of convenience, and to have a life independent of historical and analytical uses. It is the *use* of the concept of 'civil society' in policy that is my concern in a paper like this. At a Development Studies Association meeting in 2000, the head of the 'Civil Society Challenge Fund' of the British Government's 'Department for International Development' (DFID) admitted *without embarrassment* that she could not define what she or her Department meant by 'civil society' but that they were going to go ahead and strengthen it anyway.

My concerns start specifically from the fear that 'civil society' is used in a way that ignores conflict. Attention to 'civil society' rarely acknowledges the inherent conflicts between interested parties and between social groups in any society. Civil organisations are often set up precisely to cope with and strengthen an interested party's hand in conflict with other interests. Local institutions are dynamic social structures that usually reinforce existing power relationships and the status quo. But the term in current policy is being used to emphasise an optimistic picture of responsible citizenry arguing for the common good. In such use the concept provides little opportunity for tackling conflicts within a society and amongst the citizenry of a country. Thus policy debates give the impression of increasing the potential to build peace, whilst they risk allowing other potentially conflicting forces to undermine what potential 'civil society' approaches could have.

I am also concerned about moral and ethical difficulties involved, and often ignored, in promoting 'civil society'. Formal and less formal associations that fit within the description of 'civil society' include the Ku Klux Klan, the Real IRA, and paedophile networks. The term 'civil society' has strong

moral overtones which effectively exclude such negative and destructive associations by default. Surely the KKK cannot be considered 'civil'? Surely paedophile networks are outside 'society'? But if the KKK is not included in debates on civil society organisations, where is it included in debates about the actual formalised, interested, associational structures that are part of society and often influential in government? One can hope that the balance of organised interest groups tips towards the positive or at least that the overall balance is neutral. Ignoring unpleasant features of society by refusing to acknowledge them, does not make them go away and is not only irresponsible, but even unethical. Debates on peacebuilding surely must deal with undesirable aspects of civil society.

The term 'civil society' is also used to hide selectiveness by funders, denying the political and ideological priorities in decision-making about who to fund to do what. The term 'civil society' has been defined in a way that enables funders to appear largely apolitical, to be serving the greater good, and to hide potential ideological conflicts within the global aid industry especially when funding work in other countries, where war is still in the air. In doing so funders may avoid political controversy, but the fact remains that work at the level of local people and local organisation is highly selective and thus highly political. The realities of practical relationships post-conflict may leave no alternative to such spin, but in a seminar series such as this I hope we can afford to address this point openly.

Where the concept of civil society is established as part of policy, it is followed by the practical questions of how to 'strengthen' civil society. 'Civil society' as a context for debates on NGOs seems to be in use largely as the 'collective noun' that indicates formalised associational structures, outside the control of Government, including CBOs and NGOs. Funders and international NGOs attempt to increase the number, range and sustainability of formally organised bodies and networks in any one country. But it is hard to build good practice on badly defined or undefined concepts. Which leads me back to NGOs.

I will return the concept of 'civil society' to the background at this point, and concentrate on the more straightforward question of the roles NGOs and INGOs could have in peacebuilding. As NGOs are defined in direct contrast to Government organisations, it is appropriate to compare their 'role' to that played or potentially played by formal Government organisations and state structures. Looking in the other direction, towards the people of a country and informal clusters and organisations, it is also appropriate to compare NGOs with CBOs.

Why do we want to work with local NGOs and INGOs?

Why is there such interest in whether and how to work with NGOs in post-war peacebuilding? Scanning earlier papers and work by other writers provides extensive evidence and experience of effectiveness of some NGOs in contributing to peace. There are fewer published stories of NGOs contributing to a worsening situation, other than anecdotal hints and notes in epilogues about successful NGOs going off the rails after initial successes. No one would claim that NGOs always succeed, but perhaps these stories do not get written because they do not make happy reading, and few people want to or are welcomed to scrutinise and report on failures. Attention is focused on how to repeat successes.

NGOs at times may also simply be better than nothing, a structure for local action, communication, and dispensing resources when no other structures exist. They provide a mechanism that might work where Government has failed. International organisations want to work with NGOs because they want to work with local people. There is a search for a mechanism that can support grass roots initiatives and that recognises and responds to local people's realities. But large bodies or outside funders are not able to work with individuals, or with the complex and socially diverse mass of a population and need a 'proxy client' (Donnison 1993) which NGOs can provide. Working with NGOs is an alternative to setting up and running mass access structures. It is an alternative to creating a system of bureaucratic categories where diverse people can be identified as being entitled to support because they meet specific criteria (eg. living below a pre-set poverty line measured by annual income). Such bureaucratic access systems are designed to facilitate rationing (Wood 1985) but are extremely costly, cumbersome and unreliable. They are difficult for international bodies who are much constrained in what they can do, the number of staff they can provide and the nature of relationships they can build on the ground. Large INGOs face similar problems. These bureaucratic systems are prone to the failings of blueprint approaches as described by Judith Large earlier in this series (2001).

INGOs and funders also see NGOs as alternative structures that can be supported as a deliberate alternative, in opposition to Governments. NGOs appear to offer new structures, outside old and failed systems, an alternative channel for bypassing corrupt or entrenched interests in existing Government organisations. Funders may need NGOs as supposedly neutral bodies in politically sensitive times, though as I have noted, NGOs are as much interested parties in a situation as any other group.

Another reason that funders explore work with NGOs is without doubt the effective image-building that NGOs and the INGO community have done over the past twenty years. The constant flow of good news from NGO writers sits well with the essential optimism of policy. A key journal issue in 1987 (Drabek, *World Development*) summarised distinct 'comparative advantages' that NGOs had over Governmental and bi-lateral organisations, listing voluntarism, values and ethical motivation of staff, cheapness and flexibility, neutral or apolitical operations that stopped NGOs being threatening to Government. NGOs were seen as catalysts for snowballing local development, particularly by avoiding bureaucracy and remaining flexible in their activities and relationships with local people. NGOs were seen as facilitators for local people, more able to listen and respond, more able to facilitate, enable and support than larger, unwieldy bureaucracies. In addition NGOs were supposed to be raising 'new' money from the public that was untied to political aid agendas, and to be mobilising a constituency in the country of origin to support policy lobbying and awareness of development issues. At this time David Korten introduced the notion of '4 Generations' of NGO, from 'Relief and Welfare' to 'Community Development' (participation), 'Sustainable Systems Development' (advocacy), and 'People's Movements' (people-centred development). He wrote with a strong moral agenda, emphasising that NGOs should be moving towards being third or fourth 'generation' organisations.

The arguments in favour of working with and through NGOs have changed since the 1980s. By the late 1990s NGOs writers were writing less about voluntarism and more about professionalism. Values were still important and NGO supporters claimed that an ideological and ethical basis for their work gives NGOs an advantage over Government in two ways. First, an ideological motivation improves the quality and honesty of an NGO's activities and thus increases the improvement they can bring to local people's lives. Second, it enables NGOs to be a watchdog on other bodies, acting as part of a system of checks and balances on local or Governmental parties. But ideological commitment does not ensure justice – after all, the KKK has an ideological commitment underlying its activities.

As voluntarism was replaced with professionalism, NGO management was becoming more rational and efficient, and often more tightly controlled from the centre. Development interventions increasingly focussed on project-based management, 'scaling up', and exit strategies. This shift was closely related to rapid expansion of available funding for INGOs from neo-liberal Government purses from 1992 onwards, where funds had previously passed largely from Government to Government. The increase in funds available for NGOs saw a massive increase in the number and size of INGOs (Wallace et al 1997). NGOs increasingly adopted logical framework analysis and similar highly structured rational planning tools under encouragement from funders. Funder priorities and agendas are clearly evident in many NGOs' policies, procedures and programme priorities. Hulme and Edwards, amongst others, question whether donors and NGOs have become 'too close for comfort' (Hulme and Edwards 1997). I was taken aback when one of my new Masters students this year described 'meeting donors targets' as an *ethical* obligation in development work.

INGOs, working increasingly with and through local NGO partners, still claimed an advantage over Government and multi-lateral operations in being able to protect innovation, listen and respond to local people's priorities and create participatory processes in their work. Participation was a key concept and innovations in participatory methods for applied research drove many debates. NGOs adopted and promoted applied participatory methods such as Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and its many related schools for planning. They attempted to lobby other organisations working locally, such as local Government, to adopt more participatory approaches in their work. NGOs writers also lobbied hard for multi-lateral agencies, such as the World Bank, to adopt such approaches, but lost control of the agenda when the World Bank and others did just that, incorporating participatory research methods and 'participation of civil society' into Poverty Reduction Strategy Processes that are now being presented to many impoverished countries as a new condition for continued aid.

The attention to distinguishing NGOs from Government organisations has tailed off, and now greater emphasis is given to distinguishing between what NGOs should be from amongst the growing range

of formal organisations involved in aid work, including private companies, or organisations that would describe themselves as NGOs, and concentrate mainly on delivering relief or services under contract ('public service contractors' eg. see Robinson 1997) with little priority given to alternative or innovative visions of the future. It is in this continuing debate that INGO writers, who had held the high ground when arguing for the comparative advantage of NGOs as the best alternative to government aid work, find themselves in the valleys and having to argue for NGO legitimacy in comparison to the newly elevated notion of 'civil society organisations'.

I note that comments in earlier papers and seminar reports in this series refer to NGOs as having particular potential with regard to cultural sensitivities and to coping with difficult, destroyed and traumatised relationships at the local level, even negotiating between individuals. Hopes and examples are given where NGOs have sought to increase harmony and tolerance between previously warring parties and, in doing so, are creating space to rebuild relationships. NGOs are also seen as able to ask unpopular questions. NGOs are seen as having potential to be creative and innovative in activities to tackle conflict, insecurity and trauma. They are able to draw from existing local cultural and institutional bases to do this in ways that non-local bodies (such as central government or INGOs) cannot. Another feature of the comments about NGOs is that they have potential to build and rebuild communication amongst people, and also between local people and national or international structures if necessary. A crucial element in this communication role is the potential to act as a channel for resources that might not otherwise reach local areas. Another is the role of witness, monitor and reporter, to provide access to international agencies for protecting those who are vulnerable, where local protection fails. NGOs are also reported as able to remain active at times and places when other organisations and parties cannot act, during ceasefires etc. There are comments about the value of NGOs where their intentions are good, where they can be friends to other, non-local parties, who seek peace.

What distinguishes NGOs from other local institutions?

If one looks beyond the advocacy and hopes of NGO writers there are only a few features of NGOs that are essential to them and that, necessarily, distinguish them from other kinds of organisation such as local Government bodies or CBOs. Of those distinct features some are about what NGOs cannot do, rather than what they can do. A first issue regards income and control of resources. NGOs cannot raise funds through taxation, though they may be able to generate some income by charging fees for local activities, such as services. They cannot enforce payment or contributions from supporters or others who may gain from their work. NGOs depend largely on unreliable sources of income such as public subscription or international funders, and therefore depend heavily on maintaining the goodwill of their funding constituency. Maintaining that support is more crucial to the survival of the organisation than legitimacy with the local population that is likely to be affected by the NGO's activities. NGOs do not ultimately control their own funds, or do so increasingly only by the grace of funders, especially if they are part of a boom wave in new NGOs brought about by policy shifts and new funding sources made available on condition of NGO registration. Where receiving international funding, NGOs are in a completely unbalanced power relationship.

In comparison, the state can tax the public and enforce payment, and in doing so has a renewable and autonomous income. However, many Governmental organisations that have development briefs depend on other parts of Government for their funds, or even depend on outside funders, so this distinction is not absolute, especially as sections of Government or semi-autonomous units 'QUANGOs' are often acting as if they are NGOs. CBOs can require contributions from CBO members as a condition of them being members and benefiting from the CBO's activities, though such income is limited by what the members can offer.

Another distinctive feature of NGOs is that they cannot enforce people's rights. NGOs have no recourse to legitimate coercive force or the threat of force to protect people. They can only appeal other structures of justice and enforcement such as the police, where policing exists. This contrasts with Government and CBOs. Government, if it wishes, can theoretically make legitimate use of force to protect people and their rights (eg. police, army, judicial punishment). Government can call on legitimate authority, (where body *A* gains the willing compliance of other bodies because the latter consider *A*'s claims to be justified), whether because of charismatic, traditional, or legal-rational authority, backed up if necessary by legitimate use of force. NGOs may be able to gain authority

through charismatic or traditional authority, but not through legal-rational authority. CBOs may not legally be allowed to use force or threats, but as part of local society, CBO members can take co-ordinated and more or less covert actions such as physical restraint or social and economic blackmail to sanction neighbours. CBOs can use these kinds of tactics for many ends, of which protecting people's rights and justice is only one.

A third distinctive feature of NGOs is that they are likely to be somewhat restricted in their geographical spread. They are unlikely to be country-wide, or if so, to be active evenly across all parts of a country. The same is of course true for Government, but Government does start, in theory at least, from a country-wide spread. CBOs are located in one place only.

Fourth, there is the issue of NGOs' local accountability and legitimacy, by which they claim the right to act and entitlement to apply for international resources. NGOs are rarely truly accountable to local people whom they affect through their activities, and it is perhaps this lack of accountability that gives them the potential flexibility so prized by funders and supporters. I will return to this issue in more depth later in the paper.

What of INGOs? INGOs cannot tax or fund-raise locally, and do not have a tax base at home either. As with national NGOs, INGOs rely on unreliable, often goodwill sources, including popular appeals or large multi-lateral or bi-lateral Governmental aid funds. They cannot use force or the threat of force at any time without risking staff being thrown out and local staff left extremely vulnerable to retribution. INGOs may have a reach across an entire country, whether directly, through local NGOs and CBOs, or by operating at national policy fora.

This piece is not about undermining the idea that NGOs can play a significant role in peacebuilding, but is seeking to explore the features of NGOs that are particular to them and likely to be an asset in peacebuilding, and distinguish features they may share with other possible agencies in this task.

What is necessary for peacebuilding?

I will follow two themes in exploring NGO roles in post-war peacebuilding: whether NGOs can provide checks and balances on people who could abuse positions of power and turn conflict into violence; and whether they can reduce the vulnerability of some people to abusive and/or violent situations. For lasting and prosperous peace the population of a place or a country needs checks and balances on those who have the potential to transform conflict into abuse and violence. To monitor, communicate about and respond to such parties the people need literacy, freedom of information, freedom of speech, freedom of association, a free media. For many people such freedoms are an abstraction unrelated to daily life.

To reduce vulnerability to abuse the people of a country need to avoid or escape the insecurity of grinding poverty and gross inequalities. They need access to material and social resources, services such as primary health care and education, independent access to markets, and access to bodies that regulate and enforce equal rights. Access to resources (from a free media to affordable credit) must be equitable if they are not to reinforce vulnerability. Poverty is relational, as people's vulnerabilities are exploited and reinforced by others controlling resources and interaction, whether at the household, local or national level. Confidence or lack of confidence to act against abuses of power is reinforced by culture, affecting people's sense of identity and values.

Any structure or organisation that is in a position to tackle such issues would need the will to do so. Contrary to ideological statements by governments and NGOs the whole world over, there is no feature of either that means workers or leaders will necessarily wish to protect and provide for their people equitably. Whether or not the workers of any organisation, from state bodies to NGOs, aim to deliver public goods equitably will depend partly on whether those governing the organisation aim for equitable goals.

If those who govern have equitable goals, there is still the question of whether they are likely to be effective. Do they control the structures and processes of their organisations adequately? In the case of Government, none of democracy (rule by the people), oligarchy (rule by an elite) or autocracy (rule by one person) will guarantee that Government has equitable goals or effective control of state organisations. In many cases governments will not wish to deliver equitable public goods of the sort

described. In the case of NGOs, although great claims are made in order to reinforce the necessary image of legitimacy, there is no guarantee that those who govern will have equitable goals or effective control of local staff and activities. Given diversity of the people in a country, and existing spatial and social inequalities, equitable protection and provision requires:

- sound and locally differentiated information
- responsive planning and adaptation in practice to local realities, given social, economic and political diversity
- equitable collection of resources and equitable delivery and facilitation of services and local actions
- checks and balances on the protectors and providers (governance and accountability)

In a post war situation a population is also facing total loss. After a war, state structures are unlikely to be oriented or have the capacity to deliver equitable public goods. Even if they do wish to deliver equitably, after war and violence, politicians and civil service managers will not have effective control of the mechanisms of the state. Relationships have been irrevocably changed at national and local levels. Social systems and institution may be in tatters.

Diana Francis used a progression of five stages to explore issues and possible actions in making a transformation from violence to politics, being transition, reintegration, participatory politics, socio-economics and culture. I will borrow these headings to structure this discussion, and also draw from her discussion within these headings without attempting to be exhaustive.

Initial Transition (ceasefire, inclusiveness, incentives without amends, constituencies for peace, addressing the causes of violence, status of refugees and internally displaced people, security and enforcement)

NGOs may be able to offer certain advantages in contributing to the initial transition from violence to conflict through other means where they can maintain some local legitimacy and neutrality to strengthen local and 'vertical' advocacy work. This role would fit with Korten's ideal of 'third generation' NGOs. The flexibility and neutrality NGOs sometimes claim would be an asset, not least when NGOs are taking on the role of delivering relief, as noted by Howard Clark when he referred to NGOs moving between ceasefire lines. NGOs can deliver relief flexibly, though they do not have the scale that INGOs may have to deliver efficiently. Dependence on outside funding sources is likely to undermine flexibility, unless those funders are willing to delegate all decision-making to the NGOs. However NGOs have no potential to protect people's rights or physical well being, which may need force or the threat of force at times. NGOs may have the local sensitivity and knowledge to create communications and delivery systems that create positive relationships and participation by other local people from the start – laying the groundwork for future socio-economic and cultural developments whilst still within earshot of war.

INGOs and CBOs may also be able to work towards building constituencies for peace. NGOs may be able to play a special role as intermediaries between knowledge and power systems (local people's structures and culture and international bodies' for example), precisely because of the unusual experiences and languages NGO staff are likely to gain in negotiating funding relationships with outsiders, giving them insight and alliances on both sides.

Psychological Change and Reintegration (dealing with the past, knowing and acknowledgement, apology, reparation, compensation, punishment rituals, recovery from trauma, reintegration of refugees, community relations work, role of education and the media, maintenance of security)

A theme that emerges in many works, that seems to fit under this heading, is that of building or rebuilding community after war (also Korten's 'second generation' of NGOs). The purpose of building community seems to be about creating greater harmony, tolerance, liberalism, even consensus between conflicting local parties. In this sense it is almost tautological to say peacebuilding requires community building, it is as if community is peace. This general view is challenged by equally wide recognition that conflict is inevitable, and probably desirable in a dynamic society, so long as it is manageable and managed. People are driven to act on the basis of their subjective interests, which may not be selfish, but are often contrary to other people's interests and are inevitably

a source of conflict. The view of community as peaceful co-existence is also challenged by the recognition that a sense of community is often bound up with identity issues, which can spill into violence. When trying to build communities and relationships, are NGOs aiming for harmonious consensus and cooperation? This seems unlikely, but such dreams can be found in NGO writings and in some writings arguing that NGOs or 'civil society' will build a better future for ordinary people. At best we will create systems and cultures where conflict does not destroy people's lives.

At the stage of attempting to reintegrate formerly warring parties, the issue of NGOs' need for local legitimacy comes up. Here is a difficulty for NGOs. To be able to act locally, NGOs need local support and to get that they need local people to see them as having some legitimacy in their approaches and actions in that specific local situation. But that image of legitimacy is subjective and local support will be linked to finding favour with certain interested parties amongst many, groups with shared social or political identities and ideologies, that are likely to be deeply affected by the experiences of the previous months or years of war. Legitimacy with one party can rule out support by another or even a workable relationship. NGOs may have the potential to disseminate unpopular messages, but if they do so the staff and supporters risk alienating sections of the local population. The staff and supporters of an NGO are not likely to be free of historical, social, ideological history and associations either. It is likely to be those very associations that enable an NGO to work within an area and with a degree of understanding and sensitivity.

At this psychological, personal, culturally sensitive level, NGOs and CBOs will have a considerable advantage over INGOs or Government if they wish to use it. INGOs simply do not have the local understanding and sensitivity needed. They can recruit local staff to enhance their understanding, but it is managerially more efficient to support local NGOs to fulfil this role from their independent efforts. Government is constrained by law and bureaucratic needs from certain kinds of negotiations. The state – if it is aiming to distribute benefits equally – is constrained by objective criteria created to simplify the task of rationing scarce resources in fair or equitable ways. Thus equitably-oriented state bodies are hampered in negotiations between local parties, because a successful process depends on the development agency being able to adapt to local conditions and negotiate special arrangements with diverse parties. Were Government agencies to do this it would be a form of corruption. The scale of Government operations and the managerial demands of rationing systems limit Government flexibility, preventing the responsiveness to local realities that is necessary if an agency is to bring angry unhappy people together in a way that may be helpful. NGOs do not face such constraints.

However, I don't feel there is clear evidence that NGOs generally make the most of this potential for local adaptation, though certainly cases are reported where a few do. In addition, where international funding is fuelling a rapid expansion (in number and size) of NGOs, that funding comes with conditions about priorities and management processes, that reduce NGOs' potential to respond to locally specific situations (Wallace et al 1997).

Geographical spread is also a factor. What wider impact can NGOs working at this level hope to have, as work to facilitate individual and personal recovery from trauma is so localised, draining and ongoing. When such effort is required to recreate relationships within a small group of former neighbours, how many places can benefit? And can NGOs' localised efforts contribute to peace across a wider land? There are forms of grieving and recovery in all cultures. NGOs may be adding to these, but it is more likely that they are building on cultural forms and opportunities that already exist in widespread forms.

Participatory politics (democracy?, politics and identity, political regulation of conflict, accountability and corruption, role of civil society, political cynicism, media role, values and ideals, security, external support)

Participatory politics is about people taking part, intentionally and actively, in their own system of managing power and decision-making in matters that affect them and others in the same population. It is about a system of negotiations between conflicting interested parties, who often do not have the same potential to ensure the systems serve their needs. Participatory politics needs systems that can reflect and cope with conflict, without abuse of power. It needs a rule of law, and systems of arbitration, justice, representation and review. A citizenry needs to keep checks and balances on those who are in positions of power and who have the potential to abuse those positions, transforming

conflict into violence, amongst other things. Those who are vulnerable especially need equitable access to these systems of arbitration and representation.

Participatory politics goes beyond Government decision-making, and starts from decisions over people's behaviour in one's own street, even in one's own home. We must take seriously the idea that the personal is political if we are ever to tackle gender vulnerabilities and abuses. Participatory politics is about managing relationships, about power and inequality in relationships.

What role do NGOs have?

Let me consider the issue of social or local organisations generally, taking NGOs and CBOs into account and recalling the earlier discussion on civil society and civil society organisations. Participation is grounded in conflict between interested parties who are acting intentionally to serve their interests. Participation in this context clearly requires skills and resources, and those who are already relatively advantaged and powerful can participate more easily. Cultural and social matters such as gendered expectations or opportunities will be highly significant. Organising is one way to strengthen your potential and effectiveness in participatory politics. But organising requires yet more special skills and resources. More vulnerable people in a society are often less able to organise than those who are already relatively advantaged. Civil society organisations including CBOs and NGOs are created by and represent the interests and perceptions of elites. To over-emphasise support for civil society organisations is to promote oligarchy, not equitable, participatory democracy.

NGOs are not democratic organisations – in the sense that they are not ruled by the people – despite extensive claims that they are a key channel for local people's voices. NGOs may genuinely aim to represent and serve the people, but as noted earlier, their primary need for organisational survival is to maintain their funding constituency. The funding constituency is probably either an interested local constituency, a mass audience responding to popular appeals, or international sources. None of these counts as local accountability, and as constituencies they are unlikely to be the same as the population affected by the NGO's activities.

The state may not take any great efforts to be accountable to its citizenry, but it does have a defined constituency. The state is governed by a Government system, and branches of local Government and municipal authorities not only have a defined local constituency, but often have systems in place for local voices to be heard. Whether those systems work or are used is another matter. There is potential in local Government structures to create systems for equitable participatory politics, and that potential does *not* exist with NGOs. NGOs may be able to lobby, educate, even train local Government workers so they are better able to listen to local people, but such actions are at the discretion of NGO workers and executive and are not an essential feature of NGOs. For international agencies, Sphere's declaration that international organisations have a fundamental requirement to be accountable to those they seek to assist is a sound principle, but there is no body outside the organisations themselves that can enforce it (Sphere 2000:9). It is something INGOs can choose to do or not, and I am not aware of any arbitration or representation systems that can require INGOs to meet such commitments.

Socio economic foundations (exclusion and marginalisation, poverty and wealth, do no harm, human thriving) & ***Culture and personal assumptions*** (no escape from cultural bias, culture and gender, conflict prevention not a goal, cultural, structural and behavioural violence and abuse, war and social development)

In discussing peacebuilding related to socio-economic foundations and culture there is a clear transition to themes often seen as development concerns, possibly social development issues. As INGOs such as ACORD have found and argued many times, there is no separation between development and relief in conflict or other emergency situations. There is an established principle that effective delivery and sustainable development depend on locally appropriate and grounded structures from day one. Some activities can be undertaken effectively by NGOs, but NGOs can never provide the integrated services, systems and scale of operations across a whole district or whole country that are needed for just and equitable long-term development.

Impact and influence of funding priorities on NGOs

In most post-war situations even a willing state will not be able to support many important structures and resources for peacebuilding. Resources from outside agencies can be crucial. The way those resources are offered, channelled, monitored and possibly controlled will have a huge impact on how useful they are in building peace.

Some of the reasons international agencies may believe in NGOs were given earlier. There are other factors that make them attractive to international funders. NGOs are attractive to international funders because they have a local basis and can provide a relatively simple and low cost channel for distributing funds. Looking from a purely pragmatic and possibly cynical angle, NGOs provide an alternative channel to structures that have previously failed or proved untrustworthy. It is easy to encourage people to set up new NGOs, and a failed project can be blamed on NGO incompetence with minimal blame falling to a funder's staff or own systems. A funder has no long-term commitment to the NGO, and when staff in the funding organisation change, which they do frequently, there is not even a personal or emotional commitment. New staff often start by breaking old links and building new ones with new organisations. NGOs are also weak in negotiations with the international funder – unlike Governments or other international bodies – and are likely to conform to the conditions and procedures required of them by the funder.

Those conditions and procedures are often extensive, demanding their own share of resources, specialist skills and effort from NGOs. One intention underlying funders' conditionalities is to reduce the influence an NGO's staff member or executive may have on what happens locally because of their ideological beliefs or subjective interpretations and preferences. The main intention I can see behind the procedures that NGOs are expected to adopt on behalf of their funding bodies is to make the situation on the ground more visible to non-local professionals in the funding agency. Funders need to account for resources to their own back funders (other bodies, or Government treasuries), and thus must show they are monitoring and controlling the use of resources allocated to NGOs.

Not all NGOs will be able to work in ways that external funders and supporters approve of and there is always some element of selection. Decision-making staff probably need to justify their selection of NGOs within larger bureaucratic structures. To do so they establish what are meant to be objective criteria for selection, so as to reduce any subjective or unexpressed ideological base for decisions. One area of such criteria is likely to be whether selected NGOs will be able to work in ways that facilitate the funder's own managerial needs. For example, funders are often under pressure to act quickly, or spend funds by certain deadlines, and where there is an existing relationship with an NGO, or where a new NGO is able to meet the basic procedural requirements fastest (eg. project proposals in the correct format) they will have a head start on other funding applicants.

One effect of this, recorded in many instances, is a sort of 'hoop-jumping' activity, in which NGOs successfully create the image of meeting funders' requirements and thus gain access to resources, whether or not their projected image and plans are likely to meet the promises. This is a sort of corruption. I would argue that such actions are reinforced when funders rely heavily on objective, bureaucratic and often centrally produced criteria, rather than on good old-fashioned, sustained contact between skilled and experienced staff and local partners, both NGOs and others familiar with a local situation.

Conclusion

What role then for NGOs and CBOs in post-war peacebuilding? Let us separate claims and hopes from what is necessary, likely and actual. Firstly there is the question of different organisations' will to provide for vulnerable groups, protect rights and recreate equitable relationships and opportunities; then the question of their effectiveness in realising this will. Each of the kinds of organisation I have touched on – CBOs, NGOs, local Government, central Government and the state, INGOs and other international bodies and funders – has different strengths and weaknesses in different contexts. Many of the features associated with NGOs, such as ability to work directly with local people, or will to provide equitable access to participatory political systems, can also be features of agencies that are shaped as other organisational structures, such as CBOs, or local Government. The leaders of South African NGOs or 'civics' flew into posts in the new post-apartheid Government as soon as the votes of 1994 elections were counted. The civics movement virtually collapsed. Its time had come and

gone. It was not the structures of the civics or the civic movement itself that mattered, but the possibility civics offered as some sort of channel for action and interaction when there were no other alternatives. It was the people, the interests, the relationships, the commitment, the wish to improve the lot of South Africa that fuelled first the civics movement and then flowed into Government. It was not the civics that created those people or commitment.

Institutional flexibility, responsiveness and ability to appreciate local actors are clearly crucial in effective peacebuilding. These features are neither restricted to NGOs, nor necessarily a feature of them. However, NGOs can have these features, especially when they are part of local institutional structures. The fact that I have doubted so many of the claims for NGOs does not mean I doubt that NGOs can make a significant contribution to post-war peacebuilding. It is to emphasise that NGOs have fewer necessary advantages than is often supposed and that other local institutions, including local Government, can play similar roles and should not be excluded from our thoughts. It is also to say that no matter how positive policy statements are about NGOs and civil society, there are dangerous and potentially damaging aspects of any institutions that are built on interests and identity. One must judge each specific situation, and each specific group of local or national actors in their own rights, in a dynamic institutional context changing over time.

Policy-making (organisational and Governmental) is essentially optimistic. It is aiming to work towards a better future. It is also essentially pragmatic. The attention to civil society and NGOs is also framed as an optimistic debate, looking for the best in a situation, looking for solutions to problems of conflict, abuse of power, scale and equity. But the current lack of attention to negative aspects of civil society and of NGOs is worrying. If there must be objective criteria for selection, let those criteria be based on processes and relationships. Give fair play to the experience and impressions of staff who have built up substantial local knowledge, not someone applying guidelines from central office.

I recently borrowed the notion of 'plasticity' from an article on gender and brain development. The argument runs that our brains are extraordinarily 'plastic' – that is to say that they change shape and constructions according to how we use them. Where our activities are influenced by our gender upbringing, our brains change to suit the activities we undertake, until we become more capable of certain kinds of activity than others, making it harder still to escape gender constraints in later life. I don't want to add further inappropriate terms to the debate, but plasticity is an intriguing metaphor for social change. It makes me wonder what impact we might be having on local social structures and long term hopes for peace, if we give unbalanced support to just one sort of local organisation on the basis of an idea rather than on hard headed analysis of evidence.

Bibliography

Donnison, David (1993): The challenge of urban regeneration for community development
Community Development Journal 28/4 pp293-298

Esman, Milton J and Norman Uphoff (1984) *Local Organisations – Intermediaries in Rural Development* Cornell University Press, London

Francis, Diana (2000): Conflict Transformation – from Violence to Politics *CCTS Newsletter* No.9
Committee for Conflict Transformation Support

Hulme, David and Michael Edwards (eds)(1997): *NGOs, States and Donors – too close for comfort?*
Save the Children and Macmillan

Korten, David C (1990): *Getting to the 21st Century – Voluntary Action and the Global Agenda*
Kumarian

Large, Judith (2001): The Interplay of Domestic, regional and international Forces in Peacebuilding
Politics *CCTS Newsletter* No.13 Committee for Conflict Transformation Support

Lewis, David and Tina Wallace (eds)(2000): *New Roles and Relevance – Development NGOs and the Challenge of Change* Kumarian

Van Rooy, Alison (ed.)(1998): *Civil Society and the Aid Industry* The North-South Institute, Earthscan

Wallace, Tina, Sarah Crowther and Andrew Shepherd (1997): *Standardising Development* Worldview Press

Wood, Geof D (1985): The politics of development policy labelling – essays in honour of Bernard Schaffer *Development and Change* Vol 16 pp347-373

Possible questions for discussion

a) Regarding ‘civil society’

How far can civil society be a good thing? Is the balance 20/80 bad with good, or 50/50? How do or should we cope with the ‘negative’ interests in civil society? Can funders and agencies afford to clarify their criteria for selection of support in post war situations? Civil society is best seen as a duality with Government in the widest sense. However because the vagueness with which people use the term leaves it no potential for contributing to analysis, would a term such as ‘local institutions’ serve the same purpose with less confusion?

b) Regarding NGOs

If you remove the ideological aspirations behind attempts to promote positive support for NGOs, do we have clear evidence that they have real potential to contribute to peacebuilding? What does the evidence indicate is the key to the success of certain organisations or structures? Have we ignored the potential of local government? Is working with civil society organisations fundamentally undemocratic or even likely to undermine equitable participatory democracy?

c) Regarding accountability and legitimacy of local activities to build peace

Accountability to local people is a difficult area. NGOs can only gain or claim legitimacy for their actions to a limited extent. What does or would make NGOs legitimate in peacebuilding? Given Judith Large’s affirmation that what happens is to do with politics and power, to whom are NGOs truly accountable? Who should they be accountable to, given local conflict between groups?

d) Regarding INGOs and funders

Is there any way INGOs and funders can avoid relying on objective standards in selection and support, given the realities of diplomacy, politics, staff and resource constraints and law? Are the procedures that INGOs and funders use and require local NGOs to use in their management aiding the work of local NGOs, and if not, is there any action that a network such as CCTS can take?

e) Regarding local people

How far do outsiders, including ourselves, believe local people to be capable of building peace? Can outsiders support NGOs in order to contribute to this? How far are we looking at local people as ‘the others’?

Sarah Crowther, November 2001

The Role of NGOs, National and International in Post-War Peacebuilding

Report of a seminar held on 1st November 2001 at Islington Town Hall, Upper Street, London

This seminar, the fourth and last in a series on Supporting Post-Conflict Peacebuilding Processes organised by the Committee for Conflict Transformation Support (CCTS), was attended by 27 people (listed at the end of this report).

Sarah Crowther, a lecturer and researcher in the Centre for Development Studies at the University of Wales Swansea opened the seminar with a brief resume of her discussion paper, which is printed above. Her paper draws especially on her research work with development NGOs and, as a newcomer to conflict transformation, she invited the meeting to elaborate on the special characteristics of conflict transformation NGOs and to draw out their own particular experiences.

Sarah identified two main aspects of post-war peacebuilding (though she alluded to others):

1. Imposing checks and balances to ensure the good behaviour of those who have the power to turn conflict into violence.
2. Reducing people's vulnerability to violence by ensuring that they have equitable access to education, health care, participatory social systems etc so that they are able to act for themselves.

She argued that NGOs had little role to play in the first of these, because they had no power to enforce particular behaviours or to prohibit others. They might, however, be able to make some contribution to 'checks and balances' in other ways, for example by helping to rebuild communication among previously warring people, as well as between local people and regional or national structures.

Their main role was in the second area, where Sarah summarised the particular advantages that are claimed for NGOs: Their voluntary nature, the ethical motivation of their staff and their intimate connection to grassroots values made them a safe and effective channel through which external organisations could support local people and initiatives. They were a more flexible, innovative and cost-effective, as well as a less bureaucratic means of reaching local people than local or national governments; capable, too, of working independently of failing local or national governments and of continuing to be effective even where those governments had collapsed. They could assist in (re)establishing democratic structures in a way that took account of cultural sensitivities (for example by building upon local rituals of bereavement and reconciliation). However, Sarah found little evidence to support these claimed advantages, and felt that they required critical examination, particularly in the light of the amount of money that is given to NGOs in crisis situations.

Sarah suggested a number of problems associated with NGOs in country: Unlike governments they had no electoral mandate and were arguably, therefore, less accountable. They did not have defined constituencies who could hold them to account, and only represented limited sections of the population. This was not to say that they could not play an important role in building participatory action, nor to say that Government systems were more effective, but only that other organisations and systems might

be equally well-placed to act effectively. NGOs were seldom politically neutral (though often regarded as being so), and might therefore exacerbate conflict, rather than helping to resolve it, by promoting the vested interests of those they support.

The growing tendency of government donor agencies to fund NGOs rather than to provide inter-governmental aid (or to do nothing) has led to a massive growth in their size and number, and, said Sarah, to a number of new challenges to their effectiveness: They were more likely to be constrained in how they acted by the priorities and political intentions of their funders. This reduced their responsiveness to local needs, made them easy scapegoats if the initiative failed and might, ultimately, undermine their belief in their own values. Their small scale, compared with international funding agencies, and the growing competition for funds, put them in a weak negotiating position, and made it more likely that they would have to compromise their objectives. The fixed- (and relatively short-) term nature of most international funding made it hard for NGOs to commit to projects for the long-term. It also increased the amount of bureaucratic effort that they needed to put into reporting on current projects and securing funding for future work.

Sarah's introduction was followed by a plenary discussion, which was continued in groups during the afternoon and concluded with a report-back plenary session. Sarah's paper proposed some possible questions for group discussion, and it was agreed that groups should follow this general framework, but focus especially on participants' experience of what NGOs (in the most general sense) can do to support peacebuilding. Since most of what was said in plenary addressed the same issues, plenary and group discussions are summarised together below, using headings that loosely follow Sarah's suggested questions, although in a different order:

The effectiveness of NGOs in peacebuilding

Many participants had examples and experiences of the effectiveness of NGOs in peacebuilding, which they shared and discussed in the group sessions. The nature of what NGOs can do depends on local

circumstances. Where there is no tradition of independent popular organising (for example in some Soviet successor states) people may need help acquiring the necessary skills. One example given was from Moldova, where there is an acute shortage of clean water, but where it did not occur to people to get organised and press the local and central authorities to take the necessary action. In such situations, NGOs and other bodies can pass on information and skills to encourage a more active citizenship.

It can be hard to mobilise people on mundane, unexciting, issues. However, where people's interests are clearly affected, they sometimes do begin to act collectively. This may provide an opportunity for people from communities in conflict to work together. For example, a town was split when the river that ran through it became the boundary between the two territories of Moldova and Transdnistria. As a result the cement works situated on either bank ceased to function for two years – until finally people from both communities campaigned together to get it working again. This was so obviously in the interests of both communities that the ruling powers could not prevent it. Once people have co-operated on one issue, further co-operation becomes easier and more likely.

Some groupings with common concerns, for instance in combating discrimination based on gender or disability, span the ethnic, religious or other divisions and again provide an opportunity for co-operation between divided communities.

NGOs can also be helpful in supporting individuals' contribution to peacebuilding. For example a teacher in Bosnia who wished to reduce the perpetuation of conflict among young people was funded to set up an NGO to run a youth centre on the boundary of two conflicting groups.

Effective peacebuilding, at whatever level, requires change, which is hard even if the people concerned really want it, and probably impossible if they don't. In such circumstances, even small steps can be difficult to take, and even harder to measure. This makes peacebuilding work easy to criticise, and may explain the observation of one participant that conflict transformation NGOs like to "dance the workshop dance". This criticism notwithstanding, the skills of conflict transformation are becoming more widely valued. Many international development agencies, for example, now acknowledge that they need conflict transformation training to help them decide how and when to intervene.

More than one participant pointed out that NGOs concerned with conflict transformation are, almost by definition, concerned with nonviolent participatory processes, not with enforcement. Their lack of ability (or willingness) to use force to ensure a desired outcome does not mean that there is nothing that they can do by way of providing the checks and balances needed to build peace.

Relationships and the choice of local partners

All groups stressed the importance of timely and thorough research by international NGOs in the conflict transformation field to identify effective local partners. There is a great temptation to choose partners who are easy to work with: because they are English-speaking, or have experience of producing the required paperwork, or understand the 'jargon' of funding agencies, rather than taking a risk with less familiar candidates who may in fact be more worthy of support. Less open to criticism, perhaps, is the tendency of INGOs to choose local partners whose values they share. While such an attitude is understandable, since it is likely to support the desired outcome, it may be that INGOs should be more prepared to work with 'the other side' – those who embody more negative aspects of society – not just with the ones that give immediate hope.

In some parts of the world (especially former Communist countries which underwent rapid change towards open markets) there is a danger of supporting local initiatives which are really businesses, because the few local people who feel sufficiently empowered to act are entrepreneurs and care more about the money than the declared objectives of their 'NGO'. One participant suggested that in these circumstances, a group that had shown its readiness to work unfunded if necessary would be a safer choice. It is important to recognise, however, that issues of 'livelihood' and 'job security' are always part of the equation, and not only for national NGOs.

The role of the international NGO is to support and facilitate local action: for instance, to 'lend power' to their local partners by creating the space where voices can be heard: both locally (between different interest groups) and internationally (by lobbying, advocacy and information dissemination). An awareness of, and sensitivity to, local partner's needs, as well as to the risks they are taking, is essential.

The chosen partner should be able to demonstrate some local validity and accountability. Elected bodies do not necessarily (or even usually) fulfil this requirement. Many elected local and national structures in areas of conflict are corrupt or uninterested, or have a power base that depends on intimidation. In such circumstances, INGOs are more likely to seek out local partners who have the courage and confidence to act differently.

More than one group identified 'partnership' as the key: involving a joint assessment of likely gains and a mutual understanding of the values that need to be shared (and those that can safely differ). If the partnership is secure in such a basis of understanding, flexibility within it should be possible. One participant offered the analogy of 'drops in a bucket': as long as it is good water, all drops can be seen as contributing positively, even if their precise colour or flavour varies. Having established such a partnership, the quality of personal relationships between local

and international NGOs is an important factor, and handovers need careful planning when key personnel change.

Where INGOs move into a region after a crisis, they may leapfrog the careful choice of partners described above. Too often they display a colonial 'we know best' attitude that undermines the work of local NGOs or even displace it completely. Key local workers are often 'poached' to work for external agencies. This is a double blow to the local NGO, as such workers seldom stay in the region thereafter, having been 'internationalised', and attracted by salaries that would be unsustainable locally; and their loss severely weakens the local NGO and leaves it less effective when the INGO pulls out, which inevitably happens before any real solutions have been found. (At least one participant wished that more of the seminar's time had been devoted to issues of neo-colonialism.)

According to one participant, the dialogue between different types of organisation is often poor: local organisations talk to each other, international organisations talk to each other, but there is little communication between local and international groupings. This means that INGOs don't make the most of local knowledge.

Another participant felt that, while local NGOs often work well together in times of crisis, they tend to fall out when the general situation improves. In South Africa, for example, civic organisations had many differences but were able to co-operate because all were opposed to apartheid. After the new government was elected, the differences became much more important, and co-operation got harder.

NGO accountability

NGOs are ultimately accountable to those people who are supposed to benefit from their programmes, but inevitably they are also accountable to their funders. The tensions that can arise in meeting funders' requirements are covered in a later section. Accountability to the constituency the NGO is attempting to serve was recognised as a serious issue, and there is no single method of ensuring that it occurs. Where good means of communication exist within the society, organisational skills are strong and widespread, and there is a culture of openness and outspokenness, organisations are likely to be held to account. It is such conditions that genuine peacebuilding organisations will be aiming to promote.

Nevertheless NGOs, and even community-based organisations, can become isolated from their constituency. Their staffs are usually drawn from an educated elite and to this extent are atypical of the wider society. In situations where there are continuing tensions and conflicts between communities, their peacebuilding efforts may further isolate them from their base in society. If they draw the bulk of their financial support from outside, there

is also less incentive for them to consult with, and be responsive to, their base constituencies.

'Civil society' and organisation structure

Some people found the term 'civil society' too broad and vague to be useful. Should organisations like the Ku Klux Klan in the USA, or the Real IRA be considered part of civil society? Most people seemed to think that they should not, since their methods and ideology were inimical to the whole concept. In Eastern Europe, during the period of communist rule, the term was employed by Vaclav Havel and others to describe a range of groupings, organisations and institutions independent of, and usually critical of, or outrightly opposed to, the existing authoritarian government. The term often still carries these oppositional connotations. There is a tendency, therefore, for governments in fledgling states or fledgling democracies to regard civic organisations and the very notion of civil society with suspicion. Better, then, to use the term 'NGO' in the broadest meaning of 'not government': the particular organisational structure is unimportant, and the 'right' structure for a particular job will depend on local circumstances.

Organisational structures and alignments are, in any case, not static; they have to 'recreate' themselves as the political context changes. For example, in Palestine NGOs were initially formed by political parties, but a growing number are now working on peacebuilding, challenging state institutions and addressing local issues with grassroots organisations. In Nigeria, during the military regime, most NGOs were essentially 'anti-military'. When the military government fell, these NGOs had to realign, to refocus on democracy. Many key NGO workers moved into government positions, as they did in South Africa post-apartheid. This should not be regarded as a betrayal (though it sometimes is so regarded by those who are left behind): it is the action, not the organisational structure in which it happens, that is important.

NGOs are sometimes criticised for being undemocratic, since they are unelected. But democracy is more than elected representation. It implies the ability to take direct political action; and NGOs are 'on the line' when they support such action.

Elected local authorities and central governments can sometimes play an important role in peacebuilding. They may be more accountable than NGOs and thus have greater authority and legitimacy. However, in highly polarised situations, local and central governments could be one of the main protagonists, promoting the interests of a particular ethnic, linguistic or national group. In such cases they are part of the problem as well as – potentially – one of the mechanisms for arriving at a solution. And NGOs in post-war peacebuilding are quite likely to be

stepping in when state or local government structures have collapsed or are not functioning.

INGOs and issues of funding and control

A distinction should, perhaps, be drawn between the role of giant international organisations with large bureaucratic structures suited to channelling aid from outside government and non-government sources, which, Sarah suggested, now predominate in the development world, and that of the smaller bodies which are more common in peacebuilding. (Sarah warned peacebuilding INGOs to take care that they are not swallowed by the large international funders, ethically if not literally, as some development INGOs have been: "...if you doubt the danger of this, ask your local partners how they see you.")

International NGOs involved in peacebuilding are generally concerned with building the local capacity for change. They are not dictating terms but trying to support what is needed locally by identifying and helping people and groups who are trying to fulfil these needs. The local groups identify what action is required, and the INGOs attempt to raise the necessary funding, as well as supporting the action in other ways, for example through training, technical advice or 'solidarity'. Like development INGOs, they have had to become more professional and more bureaucratic in recent years, to respond to the demands of funders for the 'correct' paperwork for funding applications and progress reporting. Indeed, this burden is arguably greater for them because they tend to be smaller.

Then again, conflict transformation work is almost inevitably long-term, and takes place in complex situations and in parallel with other interventions. Measuring its impact is therefore difficult and, at best, qualitative rather than quantitative. This creates particular tensions when funders require work to be conceived as a 3-5 year project delivering demonstrable results. In these circumstances, INGOs may be in a position to act as intermediaries between funders and local NGOs: to educate funders about the nature of the work and to explain how changes in the situation on the ground might require them to switch the priorities of their work. And they need to argue the case for long-term funding, even when international eyes have moved to a new, more 'fashionable' crisis region. Several participants felt the need for INGOs to enter into more open and critical discussion of funders' practices, and to lobby more actively to attempt to change them. INGOs may have more power than they think in such negotiations.

In an environment where competition among INGOs for funding is increasing, it is tempting, too, to gloss over failures and problems and to concentrate on success. This is another area where INGOs need to find more courage.

A great deal of conflict transformation work is dependent on government money. While more than one participant reported that the UK Department for International Development (DFID), for example, is sometimes flexible and responsive to changing circumstances, we should bear in mind that international bodies generally look to fund actions that suit them politically, even if their agenda remains unstated.

Government funding has more overtly political motives than funding from charities and some other international bodies. Not only must the work proposed by the local NGO be acceptable to the funding government; the source of funding must also be politically acceptable to the local NGO. This is not always the case. US funding in Palestine, for example, is not universally welcome. Government funding can cause discomfort, too, if it is not consistent with other government action, or when international 'agreements' such as Dayton leave little room for flexibility.

Closing

Almost inevitably, given its timing, the meeting ended with a brief discussion about the discomfort of discussing conflict transformation while the British government is pursuing what could be seen as a violent and counter-productive approach to conflict in its onslaught on Afghanistan. CCTS is looking at ways of acting as a committee to influence government policy. Any suggestions should be addressed to either Diana Francis or Paul Clifford. CODEP is also taking some collective action. Seminar participants and other readers of this Newsletter are also encouraged to think of what they can do as individuals: "I could..." rather than "Someone should..."

Seminar participants

Kathleen Armstrong
UK Platform for Conflict & Development
Dean Bradley House, 52 Horseferry Road
London SW1P 2AF
Tel: 020-7799 2477
Email: kathleena@codep.org.uk

Gillian Bell
Alliance for Voluntary Initiatives and Development
114/118 Southampton Row
London WC1B 5AA
Tel: 020-7400 2305
Email: gbell@caf.charitynet.org

Paul Clifford
Responding to Conflict
37 Union Road East, Abergavenny NP7 5UL
Tel: 01873-851171
Email: paul@clifford90.freemove.co.uk

Rachel Clogg
Conciliation Resources
173 Upper Street, London N1 1RG
Tel: 020-7359 7728
Email: rclogg@c-r.org

Jonathan Cohen
Conciliation Resources
173 Upper Street, London N1 1RG
Tel: 020-7359 7728
Email: j.cohen@c-r.org

Sarah Crowther
Centre for Development Studies
University of Wales Swansea
Singleton Park
Swansea SA2 8PP
Tel: 01792-295183
Email: s.crowther@swansea.ac.uk

Marwan Darweish
Responding to Conflict
1046 Bristol Road, Selly Oak
Birmingham B29 6LH
Tel: 0121-4155641
Email: marwan@respond.org

Diana Francis
CCTS
3 Prospect Place, Beechen Cliff,
Bath BA2 4QP
Tel: 01225-428811
Email: diana@dianashouse.freemove.co.uk

Steve Kibble
Catholic Institute for International Relations
Unit 3 Canonbury Yard
London N1 7BJ
Tel: 020-7354 0883
Email: Steve@ciir.org

Sian Lowe
Flat 31, 35/36 Belsize Square
London NW3 4HL
Tel: 020-7435 5457
Email: marp66@talk21.com

Joan McGregor
Responding to Conflict
1046 Bristol Road, Selly Oak
Birmingham B29 6LH
Tel: 0121-4155641
Email: joan@respond.org

Alistair McKay
Bridge Builders
Mennonites International Centre
14 Shepherds Hill
London N6 5AQ
Tel: 020-8340 8775
Email: AlistairMcKay@menno.org.uk

Celia McKeon
Conciliation Resources (CR)
173 Upper Street, London N1 1 RG
Tel: 020-7359 7728
Email: cmckeon@c-r.org

Anne Marie McCluskey
Moldova Initiative Committee of Management
c/o Farset Community Development Ltd.
638 Springfield Road
Belfast BT12 7DY
Tel: 02890-628886
Email: joecamplisson@enterprise.net

Guus Meijer
Conciliation Resources (CR)
173 Upper Street, London N1 1 RG
Tel: 020-7359 7728
Email: g.meijer@c-r.org

Ebenezer Obadare
Research Student
Centre for Civil Society, LSE
Bankside House, 24 Summer Street
London SE1 9JA
Tel: 020-7574 6703
Email: omowura2000@yahoo.com

Alan Pleydell
Quaker Peace & Service
Friends House, 173 Euston Road,
London NW1 2BJ
Tel: 020-7663 1074
Email: alanp@quaker.org.uk

Michael Randle
Peace Studies, Bradford University
39 Tower Road, Shipley,
West Yorkshire BD18 4BP
Tel: 01274-582 756
Email: mrandle@gn.apc.org

Anna Richardson
9 Bateman Street
Cambridge CB2 1NB
Tel: 01223-560588
Email: annarichardson@compserve.com

Andrew Rigby
Centre for Study of Forgiveness & Reconciliation
Univ of Coventry, Priory Street,
Coventry CV1 5FB
Tel: 02476-887 448
Email: A.Rigby@Coventry.ac.uk

Anne Rogers (rapporteur)
Holly Lawn, Prospect Place, Bath BA2 4QP
Tel: 01225-335649
Email: anne@hollylawn.org

Dessy Roussanova
International Alert
1 Glyn Street
London SE11 5HT
Tel: 020-7793 8383
Email: droussanova@international-alert.org

Susan Seymour
52 Dartmouth Park Road
London NW5 1SN
Tel: 020-7485 7649
Email: susanseymout@lineone.net

Asima Shaikh
Neighbourhood Renewal Team
Government Office for London
12 Ingleby Road
London N7 6FE
Email: ashaikh.gol@goregions.gsi.gov.uk
Simon Starling
International Alert
1 Glyn Street
London SE11 5HT
Tel: 020-7793 8383
Email: sstarling@international-alert.org

Carla Welch
Westminster Foundation for Democracy
2nd Floor
125 Pall Mall
London SW1Y 5AE
Tel: 020-7930 0408
Email: carla@wfd.org

Committee for Conflict Transformation Support

Participating Organisations

International Fellowship of Reconciliation,
Alkmaar

War Resisters International, London

Richardson Institute for Peace Research,
University of Lancaster

Quaker Peace & Social Witness, London

Responding to Conflict, Birmingham

International Alert, London

Conflict Analysis and Development Unit,
London School of Economics and Political
Science

Conciliation Resources, London

Centre for Study of Forgiveness &
Reconciliation, Coventry University

Moldovan Initiative Committee of Management,
Belfast

Chair: Diana Francis
Treasurer: Guus Meijer
Minutes Secretary: Michael Randle

Secretariat: Conciliation Resources, 173 Upper
Street, Islington, London N1 1RG, UK
Tel: +44-020-7359 7728
Fax: +44-020-7359 4081
Email: ccts@c-r.org
Website: <http://www.c-r.org/ccts>

Newsletter Editors:
Diana Francis and Michael Randle

Layout: Anne Rogers