

Dilemmas of third-party
involvement in peace processes

**Reflections for practice and policy
from Colombia and the Philippines**

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Dilemmas of third-party involvement in peace processes

1. Executive summary

Ever since conflict resolution emerged as a distinct discipline and practice, third-party involvement has been an important theme. It has become almost axiomatic that a conflict resolution approach requires third party mediation or facilitation, though of course there are many examples of parties being able to apply the principles of conflict resolution effectively without outside assistance.

In 2006, Conciliation Resources worked with partners in Colombia and the Philippines to explore issues of third-party involvement in peace processes. In Colombia, we focused primarily on the roles that international actors can play in a conflict resolution process. In the Philippines, discussions centred more explicitly on roles played by third parties from within the society experiencing the armed conflict directly. In both cases, we used examples from peacemaking practice elsewhere in the world to provide a lens through which to reflect on the experiences in both countries.

While the framing of the discussions and the contextual variations in Colombia and the Philippines necessarily resulted in different emphases during the work, it is possible to identify a useful cluster of issues emerging from both contexts. This is partly because while third parties may exhibit different characteristics, they often experience some very similar challenges and dilemmas.

The paper begins by identifying different types of third parties, acknowledging the difficulty of making neat distinctions between them. It provides a new framework for thinking about the various characteristics that define third parties and the roles they are able to play in peacebuilding. It proposes that characteristics such as whether a party is official or unofficial, formal or informal, external or internal, are actually located along a spectrum rather than being absolute categories in themselves.

From there it is possible to identify a number of common dilemmas experienced by a range of third parties. By focusing on the identification and analysis of these dilemmas, this paper addresses a gap in current literature on third-party involvement, which has concentrated on describing examples of third-party

participation and indicating the ways in which this has functioned. It is hoped that these reflections can add to our understanding of what third parties can do by exploring the challenges and limitations experienced in practice.

The dilemmas identified through our work in Colombia and the Philippines relate to issues of neutrality and impartiality, cooption, credibility and legitimacy, managing multiple roles and coordination, and the limitations of influence. There are also important observations regarding the challenges of relating to the communities experiencing armed conflict and the frames of analysis used for this.

After a brief exploration of the various dilemmas, the papers offers some suggestions for practitioners and policymakers as to how they can be alert to and respond to these dilemmas in their work.

2. About this initiative

This paper is the second in a series of reflections generated by CR's Comparative Learning project. The project is structured around a series of activities in Colombia and the Philippines which focus on different themes emerging from the peace processes in both countries. Examples from other peace processes documented in CR's Accord publication series are shared with participants, with a view to offering new ideas as well as cautionary tales about similar experiences elsewhere. On this occasion, discussions in the Philippines drew primarily on the experience shared by a resource person who works extensively in the Caucasus region of the former Soviet Union. In Colombia, participants reflected on a broader range of experiences. As one participant remarked, "knowledge of international experiences helps us to avoid starting from zero, to open our minds to new options, and to avoid mistakes that have been very costly in other countries." The visits also provide an opportunity to test the relevance of those ideas and experiences in other locations. The detailed analysis of experience in Colombia and the Philippines and the comparison with experience elsewhere provides further insights and lessons which can prove useful in thinking about how to resolve other conflicts.

The Comparative Learning project is facilitated through partnerships between CR and institutions in Colombia and the Philippines:

The Institute for the Study of Development and Peace, Colombia (INDEPAZ)

The Institute for the Study of Development and Peace is a Colombian non-governmental organization that works to create a climate of reconciliation, dialogue, non-violence and respect for human life. INDEPAZ engages actively in political debate on options for addressing the armed conflict in Colombia, and has excellent access to government and establishment officials as well as a breadth of civil society actors. INDEPAZ provides documentation and analysis on current challenges facing the peace process in Colombia and organizes a national educational network on peace and development issues. INDEPAZ translates materials from CR's Accord publication series into Spanish for publication and distribution throughout Colombia. During 2006, INDEPAZ and CR co-produced a publication focusing on the role of international actors in peace processes in Tajikistan, Angola, Sierra Leone, Nagorny Karabakh and Colombia. INDEPAZ also published documentation and policy proposals arising from discussions on this theme as part its own documentation series, *Punto de Encuentro*. To access this documentation, visit the websites www.c-r.org and www.indepaz.org.co.

The Program on Peace, Democratization and Human Rights of the Centre for Integrative and Development Studies of the University of the Philippines

The Centre for Integrative and Development Studies at the University of the Philippines (UP-CIDS) is an academic research institute committed to analysing and developing alternative perspectives on national, regional and global issues. Within the centre, its

Program on Peace, Democratization and Human Rights (PPDR) convenes the activities relating to the exchange visit. The PPDR hosts the secretariat of a citizen's network, 'Sulong CAHRIHL', which aims to promote the goals and monitor implementation of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CAHRIHL) between the government and the National Democratic Front. The Centre and its staff are well-placed to convene a broad range of actors involved in the various negotiation processes and have extensive experience of campaigning on peace issues and contributing to policy dialogue and initiatives related to the peace process.

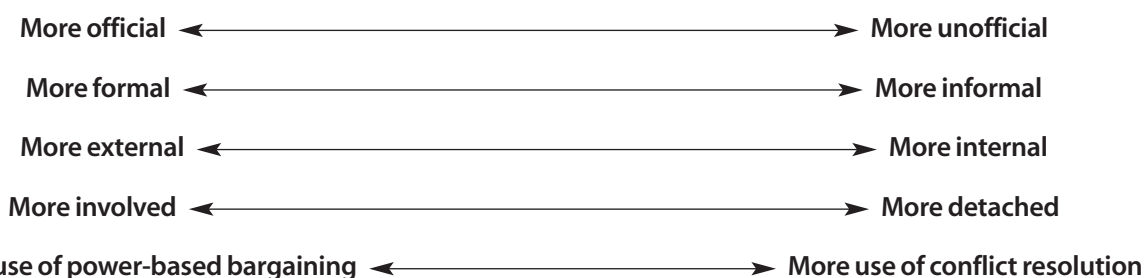
UP-CIDS recently worked with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to co-publish a five-volume series called 'Learning experiences study on civil society peacebuilding'. UP-CIDS also translated Accord materials into relevant Filipino languages as part of its collaboration with CR.

3. Characteristics of third parties

While some dilemmas are common to all third parties it was clear during the discussions that certain types of third parties exhibit and experience different strengths and weaknesses. It was equally clear that often the very quality that helped the third party in some contexts was also the source of their limitations in other respects. Therefore it is important to distinguish the different types of third party so as to be able to analyse more precisely the opportunities and pitfalls that exist.

The idea of continuum is used here because the distinction between the opposite ends of each dimension is too stark to describe accurately what happens in real life. Most third parties tend to be located towards one or other end of each dimension but with some of the characteristics of the opposite pole.

In discussion it was apparent that third parties can be distinguished by locating them along a number of dimensions:





Participants talk informally during the workshop in Mindanao, the Philippines. Source: UP-CIDS

Official / unofficial third parties

An *official third party* is appointed by some recognized body to play a specific role in the dispute. Its¹ appointment may not have been instigated by the parties to the conflict (for example it may be mandated by a regional organization of states) but the parties will normally have accepted its involvement because otherwise it would be extremely difficult to function effectively. An *unofficial third party* is operating without the authorization of the parties or other recognized body and indeed they may not even see any purpose in its involvement. Nevertheless there is at least some level of tacit acceptance of its presence or it too would be unable to function. An official third party is normally a recognized body such as a state or an established non-governmental body but it is also possible for an individual to be appointed. Individuals with an official role may be the personal representative of some person or body which has an official status in other ways and their patronage gives the third party an extra level of status and legitimacy.

Formal / informal third parties

It may seem unnecessary to distinguish formal and informal third parties in the context of the distinction between official and unofficial third parties; it might be

presumed that a formal third party will be official and an informal third party unofficial. However this is not always the case and therefore it seems useful to consider the specific characteristics of formal and informal third parties. Often in the initial stages of a peace process all third parties, whether official or not, have to act in an intuitive and informal way, establishing contacts and exploring possibilities as and when the opportunities arise. In later phases of the process there may be a need for third parties fulfilling a formal role but there will often still be value in having people who work informally alongside the formal negotiations – what we often call second track interventions. In the Colombia meetings, one participant remarked on the benefits of such a process in Tajikistan and suggested that the diplomatic community could support one or more unofficial (“Track II”) dialogue processes, to complement existing peace initiatives. The purpose of the process would be to identify possible margins of agreement between the most polarized constituencies, in order to provide a basis for trust-building as well as potentially identifying the parameters of a ‘road map’ or proposing formulas to address substantive issues in the negotiations.

By *formal third parties* we mean those who work within precisely defined roles and procedures, which stipulate the parameters of the third party’s functions in a negotiation process. These approaches are either

1. The convention of using the third person neuter and singular pronoun will be applied for third parties unless it is an obvious specific reference to an individual male or female or group

agreed with the parties or at least are transparent and understood by the parties. The procedures within their own organization are often clear and precise to ensure that individual members are acting in ways that are acceptable to all its members. *Informal third parties* do not undertake to act in accordance with laid down procedures or specific guidelines, though that of course does not mean that they operate irresponsibly. They may have a personal code of conduct which influences their actions and they will have a general perspective on what is helpful. In Philippines, the NGO Bantay Ceasefire has worked officially in partnership with the Government of the Republic of the Philippines – Moro Islamic Liberation Front Coordinating Committee as an official and formal third party, whereas Sulong CAHRIRHL is unofficial – not officially part of the process – but formal – organized as such and actually engaged bilaterally with the parties.

External / internal third parties

At first sight this distinction seems to be clear-cut. Either a party is *external* to the conflict or it is part of the conflict. Certainly if the criteria for being internal or external is geographic, then it is relatively easy to see if a party is located in the conflict zone or outside. However it is not always easy to identify the boundaries of the conflict zone, particularly when boundaries are not only territorially defined, but also considered in economic, political or cultural terms. We therefore need to take into account the interests or stake that the third party has in possible outcomes, bearing in mind that an interest may be an altruistic concern for communities affected. It is also important to consider the influence and power that it can exercise.

By *external* party we are referring to a party that is less directly affected by the immediate impacts of the conflict and by implication its outcome. If it has a presence in the conflict zone, it may be able to take independent decisions regarding this presence or its involvement in efforts to address the conflict. It will often, but not necessarily, be detached geographically from the site of the conflict. A neighbouring state may be closely associated with one of the parties to the conflict and as such might be considered an internal party even though geographically detached. Regardless of its interests, it may still attempt to play a third party role, although this may or may not be acceptable to all the parties.

Internal third parties may live in the conflict zone and have a very direct interest in the outcome of the conflict. In the forum in Mindanao, NGOs acknowledged they are clearly stakeholders and have their own political positions but said that they “are not organically linked to any party”, which was an important defining characteristic for them. In the course of the discussions and interaction it was very clear that there is a special

type of internal third party which is even more deeply enveloped by the conflict. Local communities may not identify with any of the conflicting parties but may feel that they have no capacity to assert their case and feel that they are the passive victims of the conflict. Indigenous communities are often in such a position. Their interests may give them a potentially important role if they can find a way to engage. In the past I have described such groups as “embedded” (McCartney, C. Uppsala 1990), a term more recently applied to journalists who operate with front-line troops and accept the military’s authority over what they do. Nonetheless the term still seems appropriate to this type of third party because they are at the heart of the conflict and have to come to terms with the more powerful protagonists.

Involved / detached third parties

This distinction is somewhat related to the idea of being an external or internal third party. An *involved* third party will play an active role, taking initiatives, making proposals and suggesting how the peace process can be moved along. The more *detached* third party will play a more low key role, being available and responding to the needs of the parties as they make them known. Such a third party may make strenuous efforts to maintain contact with the parties so as to be available when required and to respond to the ideas and concerns of the parties but is less likely to seek out a central role in the process.

Use of power-based bargaining / conflict resolution

The type of approach that the third party adopts will present particular challenges and problems as well as opportunities. The use of *power-based bargaining* means that the third party may try to put together a deal that the parties will accept and will use pressure and inducements to get that acceptance. A *conflict resolution* approach will encourage the parties to consider the real needs and interests of all the parties and see if there is a way in which these interests could be met. Power-based bargaining typically involves shuttle diplomacy in which the third party moves between the parties trying to close the gap between what each party will accept. The conflict resolution approach is more likely to revolve around an inclusive process where the parties are encouraged to meet and exchange perceptions with each other about the nature of the conflict and on that basis work out together what might constitute a mutually acceptable solution.

4. Dilemmas facing third parties

Having identified some of the defining characteristics of different types of third party, this section will look at how their characteristics affect how they can deal with some of the challenges they face, using insights from the comparative learning project.

Neutrality and impartiality

A recurring theme is the extent to which third parties can and should be neutral (non-partisan, non-aligned) or impartial (objective) with regard to the issues in dispute and the ultimate outcome of the conflict and any settlement. Some would argue that in order to have the trust and confidence of the parties to the conflict, third parties must be neutral; others argue that complete neutrality is impossible for any individual or any state and that even objectivity may be difficult to claim in practice. This may be particularly evident in the case of states playing a third-party role, as this role exists alongside the other political, economic and cultural ties that characterize relations in the international system. The rationale guiding states playing third-party roles may be driven by a variety of motivations, including a range of national self-interests as well as commitments to upholding or promoting certain norms or standards. While they may be less explicit, other third parties will also be driven by a range of motivations, and ultimately perhaps all that can be hoped for is that the third party can act in a fair and balanced way towards all the parties. One Mindanao NGO describes itself as “independent but not neutral”. Sometimes we speak of being “multipartial”; i.e committed to all sides equally. However it is difficult to maintain such a position.

It was mentioned in relation to third parties in the Caucasus that they will normally maintain contact with the different conflicting parties and this will create suspicion. One party may need support, perhaps because it is marginalized and excluded from negotiations. In those circumstances a third party may argue for that party’s right to participate. In Georgia, for example, it was considered important to work with internally displaced people, who felt very bitter about their treatment, and bring them into the process. In Colombia women, indigenous communities, Afro-Colombian communities and campesino organizations were identified as sectors that are traditionally marginalized. One civil society activist in Mindanao thought that one role of third parties is to protect the interests of the weak. But any such actions could be seen as partial, or at the least, challenging for the protagonists.

The third party may be challenged for dealing with opposition movements that do not have formal legitimacy, because it is argued that it gives them credibility. Equally they are open to criticism if they

relate to parties, either government or insurgents, who are acting in breach of humanitarian laws, because that engagement may seem to endorse their actions. Official third parties, especially states, have particular problems in this area because they are seen to have status and legitimacy and therefore their engagement with the parties is more likely to be interpreted as an endorsement. However it is impossible to carry out a third-party role, especially using conflict resolution approaches, if one does not engage with the conflicting parties, even if it is unpalatable to do so. One way of handling such a situation is to say that one is dealing with that party not because of what it does but in spite of what it does. In Colombia there was discussion about how the United States government could enter into unofficial dialogue with FARC, which was seen as useful in promoting understanding and identifying options for addressing the concerns of both. It was considered that opening a diplomatic front would not necessarily require an overall shift in US strategy. Precedents such as unofficial listening exercises between US officials and Hamas in Palestine could provide useful lessons. Non-official third parties can more easily relate to those parties without giving them credibility but they are more vulnerable to being condemned for their interaction with them, and can even be charged with acting illegally.

A third party may unconsciously and unintentionally show bias. An internal third party may have problems of being seen as partial because it is affected by the outcome of negotiations. However an external third party can also suffer from similar perceptions because of beliefs about its allegiances or motivations for intervening, or even because of its analysis of the conflict. In Colombia participants commented on the challenges one external third party faced in building positive perceptions among the parties. He was initially invited by the government to use the good offices of his institution to support peace initiatives. While he was able to make some contributions during a period of formal peace talks, he was unable to build on these achievements after the peace talks collapsed and a new government came into power. His public statements about the nature of the conflict, the parties and the reasons for the collapse of peace talks brought him into direct conflict with the new administration’s policies. The government perceived his comments as indicative of support for one of the other parties, and withdrew its support for his work. He was unable to continue in his role.

A farther potential complication is that the third party may not be committed to the positions of either side but is committed to certain values and principles. Can it speak out and challenge the parties when they fail to adhere to those values and principles in their behaviour? Criticism of the actions of one side may also be seen as being partial. A priest in the Philippines said that often he was angry at both the government forces

and the insurgents because of their insensitivity to the local population. He asked whether there was a way in which that energy could be used creatively, and his own answer to the question was to work to create zones of peace. One of the groups in Mindanao said, "Impartiality is a core value even if we have to criticize both sides" and the other participants were in agreement.

Monitoring organizations, both official and unofficial, face particular problems in this area. If they see failures by one party they may challenge the party but they have a bigger dilemma in deciding whether to expose their findings in public. One monitoring movement says, "We collect facts but do not make judgements." Having stated the facts there is then the option of helping people to understand the facts and why the breaches of standards have occurred. It is also important to be balanced in one's criticism. In Colombia it was noted that peace and human rights organizations have signalled inconsistencies in the demobilization process with the paramilitary groups, particularly with regard to the lack of guarantees of truth and reparation for victims, and the continuation of mafia-like middle-level command structures. But despite these grave problems and their regional and national repercussions, it is also important to note that the level of homicides, massacres and kidnappings has declined at the same time as the demobilization process.

Many participants in the Philippines signalled the importance of demonstrating commitment to values and principles and to the belief in the significance of building relationships as a means to resolve the conflict. Of course it was also acknowledged that aspects of their orientation may initially be difficult for the parties to accept – for example the idea of respecting opponents. Most NGOs believe that it is important to involve local communities and to empower them to assert their right to be consulted. However, the government and the insurgents often see this as a threat to their authority, and external actors can sometimes overlook the interests of those groups who do not feel represented by the conflicting parties. Amid the many complexities of managing peace negotiations, it may be easy to overlook the benefits of public participation. That said, recent experience of the 'House of Peace' consultations between the National Liberation Army and sectors of civil society in Colombia breathed new life into peace initiatives involving that particular armed group. Both internal and external third parties have played important roles in facilitating that particular initiative.

Overall it is not seen as a hindrance to an unofficial third party's impartiality if one has clear values and assumptions, and restates them and challenges the conflicting parties when they ignore them. In fact it helps to clarify the motivation and vision of the third party and shows that it is not committed to specific

outcomes or to one side winning or losing. On the other hand a third party that starts out detached from the issues can become so committed to the process that they want to achieve a settlement, even if it should be unequal or unfair to one or more party or if it means compromising values that they consider important. For example they may believe it is important to hold perpetrators of human rights abuses to account, but one or all parties may demand impunity for past actions. Third parties often find themselves torn between their principles and the practical realities that the parties will accept in order to end the conflict.

Official third parties may have less scope to express their own values, and states may have practical political positions that may make it more difficult to express commitments to specific humanitarian values or to equity and justice as opposed to formal legal norms. During discussions in Colombia, one multi-lateral organization involved in the demobilization process with the paramilitaries was criticized for its failure to speak out regarding ceasefire violations by these groups. This was perceived not only as undermining the organization, but the credibility of the process itself.

While parties can accept that a third party may not identify with their concerns, they do want third parties to understand their perspectives and show that they understand. Third parties need to recognize that parties choose strategies because they seem appropriate to their situation and fit with their background and the evidence on the ground. They need to understand why both governments and insurgents place such emphasis on issues like freedom of movement, control of territory, derogations from humanitarian law standards, retaining the option of physical force, secrecy, maintaining some distance from people outside their own circle, and at the same time controlling their own channels of communication. Those choices can work against a party's best interests. For example it does not leave much opportunity to learn what the community wants and how it is affected by such behaviours. But they seldom see room for change given the apparent attitude of opponents. Ground realities are often created by the hostile and suspicious attitudes and actions of the conflicting parties who thereby fulfil the negative expectations of their opponents and reinforce negative behaviour. Therefore they are unprepared to respond to encouragement from third parties to consider if their assumptions are right and if they can trust their opponents. Helping them to develop that trust is a slow process, and informal third parties can be more able to do this than formal third parties. More detached third parties find it easier to allow the space for this kind of reflective interaction with parties and do not feel the pressure to move the process forward, which more involved third parties may feel.

Finally third parties' impartiality can also be compromised by their friends. The image of state third parties can be affected by the other states with whom they are associated, their attitudes to the conflict and the power relations between these actors. Informal civil society third parties are often short of resources and therefore very dependent on money from donor agencies, which can compromise them or make it practically difficult to act in a sufficiently flexible way. The donor may believe that its involvement is completely benign because it is motivated by the wish to help, but it was felt that donors need to be more critical of their impacts on local relationships.

Practice / Policy points

- Impartiality is important to aim for but does not exclude the possibility of taking clearly defined positions on values and principles and on an appropriate process for dealing with the conflict.
- It helps if one can focus on the issues and can base one's interventions on how they facilitate dealing with the issue rather than on how they may benefit individual parties to the conflict.
- Third parties must review regularly how they are seen by the parties and be alert that they may be seen to be biased to one side or another.
- A clear strategy regarding the use of public and off-the-record communication channels can be useful when attempting to strike a balance between building the parties' confidence and expressing concerns at their behaviour.
- Impartiality is aided by showing interest in the concerns of all parties and helping them to understand each other's concerns and positions. This allows the parties to agree a new definition of the problem and the road to a solution.
- It is not normally helpful to propose a solution, unless at the explicit request or with the tacit agreement of the parties.

Co-option

Co-option arises when a third party becomes identified, often unintentionally, with one side in the conflict. The parties in conflict are looking for allies and they will prefer a third party who can be supportive to them. Therefore they will work to ensure that they win the third party over to their side. If that is not possible, for propaganda reasons they will claim that the third party is more supportive of their position even if it is not the case. The third party itself will want to show good will to the parties and may give the impression to each party that they are more understanding of its position. They may not have any capacity to influence the

behaviour of one of the conflicting parties and will therefore be considered to be supporting them or at least acquiescing in their activities. One example from the Philippines illustrated this point. One of the stakeholders in the conflict invited a group to become involved, but made it clear he did not want them to address the issue of land ownership as he had interests which he wanted to protect. This placed the group in a difficult position. There will often be good reasons for feeling that one party in the negotiations is more serious, sincere and co-operative than the others and even the most impartial third party may seem to identify more with that party.

While all of these developments can be foreseen, nonetheless the end result may be that the third party is seen to have been co-opted by one side of the dispute and as a result may lose their effectiveness in mediating between the sides. One person in the Philippines described how the local community became powerless to try to intervene in the conflict because they were considered to be identified with anti-government forces that operated in their area.

In reality the parties will come to respect a third party that is difficult to co-opt and is clearly willing to be critical and challenging, because they know that the other parties will also find it difficult to co-opt it to their positions. But it may be difficult for all types of third parties to maintain that position and resist manipulation from the conflicting parties.

However the problem is not only one of the lack of capacity to resist pressure. Co-option can be very insidious and we may not see it happening. One's analysis of the nature of the conflict can demonstrate support for one of the parties and equally the range of possible outcomes espoused can ignore the outcomes desired by one of the parties. One peacebuilding group in the Central Philippines identified the cause of the conflict in their area as insurgency and consequently suggested a reduction in the presence of insurgents as one indicator of the reduction in the conflict. They were challenged by others present, who argued that this was a partial analysis of the conflict. Insurgency might well be a problem but an alternative analysis would be that there was underlying poverty that led to conflict and violent insurrection. They also pointed out that it appeared rather ironic that the peacebuilding group said that one sign of success would be the removal of one of the groups with whom they wanted to engage and it would not be surprising if this increased the insurgents' suspicions. Participants also questioned if it was wise for the group to have close connections with the government security services. It was an instructive insight into how an initiative, started with good intentions to be even-handed towards the parties, could become identified with one side of the conflict



Working groups at the INDEPAZ – CR seminar in Popayán, Colombia. Source: INDEPAZ

and damage its potential to act as a third party. An example was given of a group in the Caucasus that tried to carry out a rigorous analysis of the nature of the conflict, but in doing that was always in danger of being identified with one community's understanding of the situation, especially as the members of the group came from that community.

Practice / Policy points

- Co-option is a very insidious process and neither the third party nor the other parties may be aware that it is happening.
- It is important for third parties to establish good relations with parties but one needs to be alert that that does not lead to compromising one's position.
- While difficult, the ability to be critical and challenging to both sides can help to strengthen a third party's independence.

Credibility and legitimacy

All third parties have to establish their credibility and legitimacy to fulfil a third-party role. Parties in conflict rely first and foremost on themselves and their own determination not to weaken their stand. Consequently they fear outside interference and therefore distrust anyone who wants to get involved in resolving the conflict, particularly if they talk about working with their

enemies and taking account of their concerns. Parties who have the capacity to block the peace process are most likely to oppose outside help because they feel they have some control over the situation and fear that an outside party, who encourages dialogue with opponents and other new thinking, or with the perceived leverage to change the balance of power, will weaken that security. In Colombia it was noted that all parties to the conflict were reluctant to countenance any international involvement in peace initiatives for many years. While there have been significant shifts in recent years, differing levels of openness to external involvement remain. Some participants argued that international actors themselves have also displayed considerable uncertainty about the roles they are willing to play, and this has been an obstacle to more effective engagement.

The protagonists will often be most suspicious of the apparently altruistic third party who only wants to help out of good will. They may find it easier to understand a third party that has material interests which motivate its involvement. Equally they may find it easier to work with a third party that takes on a more active involved approach because they can evaluate what that party is trying to do; the intentions of a more detached third party can be more difficult to assess even though they do not present any apparent threat. For example, it is easier to understand a group that comes into an area to carry out projects as such initiatives are common and familiar. One person in Mindanao described a peacemaking network that did not propose to carry out projects, but asked lots of questions. This approach was

consistent with the network's values but they had to work through the resulting suspicion. The conflicting parties, particularly insurgent groups, are often suspicious of the whole idea of reconciliation because it seems to them to promote support for the status quo, namely the government. The very name which third parties use can heighten that suspicion. Some of the NGOs at the forum in Mindanao looked at the name that they used. Did it matter if they called themselves "development workers" or "peace advocates"? But the name does carry connotations and they said that it is important to be very critical of their own agenda and ask themselves if they are trying to pacify people.

Official third parties often have advantages in terms of legitimacy, credibility and access to the conflicting parties. However this is not always the case and if the parties in conflict want to make a point about their dissatisfaction with the process, they can do this strikingly by boycotting the official facilitator. In addition, because of their official status, it is more difficult for a protagonist to ignore problems related to doubts about the neutrality of the official third party. In fact it may be difficult for a party to cooperate with them because they are held responsible for the actions and decisions that their government or organization has taken. For example recently in Sri Lanka the members of the official Sri Lankan Monitoring Mission who came from European Union countries were rejected by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam because of EU proscription of the latter organization.

Local civil society is in a special position when it comes to intervening in the conflict that is taking place around them. It was said that in the Philippine context the community affected by the conflict are the best people to engage. It is hard to say that they are interfering as might be the charge levelled at external third parties. But local people often have limited power and therefore could easily be brushed aside. One government negotiator raised the problem he faces in identifying appropriate interlocutors within the community. It was also pointed out forcibly at a meeting of negotiators and other professionals that we talk glibly about the community "owning" the peace process but realistically people have little capacity to be involved and own the process. For that to happen, it would need a radical re-conceptualization of peace processes and peacebuilding. There were examples of such initiatives by local communities and individuals but education and information about the wider ramifications of their conflicts are needed, if communities are going to be able to assume this role more often. Similarly women have the potential to make a bigger contribution with specific perspectives and skills to offer, but like the wider civil society, they are often ignored.

Local people and their leaders have a moral authority that may be difficult for the conflicting parties to ignore. This may be particularly true of religious leaders and indigenous communities. But this respect is not automatically given and local leaders have to demonstrate and assert their moral authority in their demeanour and reasoning. Indigenous leaders talked of how the competing parties either ignored them or tried to get their support even though their concerns about how humans relate to the natural environment are different. It was valuable to visit an indigenous (Lumad) community in Bukidnon and it was evident that their concerns transcended the more material positions of the protagonists. There is perhaps potential for communities such as this to occupy a kind of overarching role as custodians of the process but for that to happen both the indigenous communities and the conflicting parties would have to recognize the potential in such a reconfiguration of roles. One indigenous leader who has been involved in peacebuilding efforts in the Philippines cautioned that being offered equality is not always the same as being treated with equity.

Despite the challenges, in both Colombia and the Philippines, local people at times have succeeded in playing important third-party roles in various peace initiatives. They have often drawn on their specific local knowledge and sometimes their prior personal relationships with the combatants. One local community leader said that it was important to first demonstrate one's relevance and reliability. In his case he had been involved in monitoring rising tension and potential flashpoints, and the responsible, respectful and also human way that he and his colleagues had carried out that role helped to increase trust in them. Another group helps with capacity-building workshops; these were not only useful in themselves but gave an opportunity for people to see what the members were like and an insight into their orientation.

Acceptance of an institution or group does not mean that this credibility is transferable to another member of the group; however institutions like churches and governments have to balance many competing demands on their staff. There are examples of key staff being moved and their successors having difficulty establishing their credibility or even being prepared to work on the conflict in the same way.

Practice / Policy points

- It is natural that conflicting parties are suspicious of people who want to get involved in resolving their conflict.
- Third parties need to understand why the idea of settling the conflict and promoting reconciliation is often threatening to the parties in conflict.
- The parties to a conflict will find it easier to accept a third party if it can state clearly its interests in the conflict and its reasons for wanting to be involved.
- Third parties need to critically assess what the parties tell them and why they say the things they do.
- Third parties can establish their credibility in small ways and build up a personal or institutional track record which gives confidence in their ability to do more.

Managing distinct and multiple roles

Accepting that a third party can help in certain ways does not mean that the conflicting parties will accept that person or organization in other third-party roles. The danger is that, having been acceptable in one way, the third party takes on other roles which are not appropriate and which may or may not have been agreed. It may not realize the contradictions or it may simply not be transparent in its activities, but in either case its capacity to be accepted in any capacity is damaged. This does not mean that the third party cannot establish its usefulness in other roles. It can build its credibility in small ways by providing specific help and can give the parties confidence that it can be used in other ways. In Colombia it was recognized that new ways to support the conflicting parties could be helpful, including activities to support the capacity of the negotiating teams that would increase their skills and strengthen their ability to engage effectively in the process.

On the other hand there may be an acceptance that the third party is willing to undertake a variety of roles and as a result the conflicting parties themselves can avoid their responsibility. For example third parties can take on a disproportionate responsibility for humanitarian relief and the parties may then worry less about the impact of their behaviour on local people. The third party may also come between the parties so that they can avoid difficult issues which they would have to face if they were dealing directly with their opponents. The third party can also take on a disproportionate responsibility for creating a peace process or reaching an agreement when the parties are not ready to engage; it may then become the scapegoat for any failure. An involved third party is clearly more likely to be trapped in this way than a more detached third party. It is important to recognize

that the third party can only work to build the motivation for meaningful engagement; it cannot replace that motivation if it is not there.

It was also noted that third parties can damage their credibility by avoiding certain issues and roles. A number of initiatives in Mindanao have related to security issues, including ceasefire monitoring, and it was felt that many unofficial civil society groups damage their credibility by avoiding such issues, although they are very important to the conflicting parties and the possibility of a settlement rests on resolving them satisfactorily.

It is appropriate for a third party to suggest ways in which it might assist but ultimately the parties in conflict will decide what approaches they are willing to consider. Therefore the third party has to be careful in identifying its roles and ensure that the responsibilities of the parties are clear. This requires careful preparation, planning and communication. One ceasefire monitoring group said that one of the lessons they have learnt is the importance of analysis and consensus in their work.

In Mindanao there was a good example of an initiative that was able to take on a variety of roles, even though they might seem incompatible. A local radio station established by the Catholic Church had a significant standing in the community and with the conflicting parties. It had established this reputation not only as a result of the status of the church, but because of the reliability and fairness of its coverage. It could use the network of parishes and priests to be able to report on what was happening in remote communities where the conflict was most pronounced. It also had sources of information from within the government, the security forces and the insurgents because they wanted to communicate their views through the media. The conflicting parties also had to treat it with respect because they wanted access to its audience; they also knew that they could be damaged by negative reports of any wrongdoing for which they were responsible. On this basis the station was able to take on an informal monitoring role in reporting human rights violations. This is not an easy role to adopt alongside the other functions the radio station was fulfilling, because of the risk of losing the cooperation of the parties, but the station had established a sufficiently strong position because the parties needed to co-operate with it. Going further the station manager then had a basis on which he could negotiate with the parties about problems and issues about which they heard through the network of village contacts.

Good planning is particularly important when there are a number of third parties involved or a number of agencies are trying to work together. It was pointed out that in the Caucasus and elsewhere there has been a reduction in the space for third parties as so many people want to be

involved. In Colombia a variety of actors – both internal and external – have been playing important and positive roles in the phase of exploratory dialogue with the ELN. To enhance their effectiveness, it was proposed that these third parties (including groups such as the Guarantors of the Peace House, the Facilitation Commission, the National Conciliation Commission, the Group of Accompanying Countries, and the G-24 group of donors) could consider developing one or more mechanisms to coordinate roles and strengthen complementarity with regard to strategies for peacemaking. There was interest in an example from Tajikistan of the UN's achievements in coordinating a range of different actors with an interest in supporting the peace process.

It was pointed out such coordination is difficult in practice because of differences of motivation or because principles of confidentiality often make it difficult for third parties to communicate. In Mindanao escalation in the violence provided the impetus for groups to try to co-operate. They formed a network and because the member groups had many different interests and concerns they decided to identify one core issue on which they would work. This was to get agreement on a ceasefire and once that was achieved it provided the basis on which the network approached advocacy work and investigations of breaches of humanitarian law. Both this network and the radio station are interesting case studies of how roles can develop and change. However one should not ignore the risks which would have resulted if the staff had acted carelessly and impulsively.

Practice / Policy points

- Third parties need to be aware of the explicit or implicit understanding that determines the roles in which they are acceptable.
- If the third party wishes to undertake other roles they need to shift their emphasis with great care and accept that they may be rejected in the new role.
- In identifying appropriate roles, the third party should ensure that the responsibilities of the parties are clear.
- Third parties can be more useful if they find ways to work together.
- Finding small areas of co-operation can lead to greater understanding and more sustained cooperation between third parties.

Limits of influence

Because of the distrust that exists towards third-party intervention, the parties in the conflict will be reluctant to give them the opportunity to exert influence. During the conflict the parties, including democratic states, develop structures and systems that are impenetrable to outsiders. It is often difficult to really understand what the parties' strategies are, who exercises real influence and even more how to access those people. It may well be that only the key people in each party know what other third parties are involved and what they are doing, as many third parties are very discreet in order to gain the confidence of the parties. The parties will manage and structure what they reveal to their third-party interlocutors and while they listen to any advice they are given, the subsequent decisions are reached in private and the parties are adept at finding ways to reject the advice. The third party finds it difficult to know what is really happening and what influences are really operating, even with the best intelligence. A third party which is more detached will find this less of a problem than other third parties that are more involved and proactive.

Third parties cannot automatically expect to be listened to, or that any leverage they may seek to bring to bear will have the desired impact. Powerful official third parties may be able to offer sanctions or incentives to try and influence the parties' behaviour and specifically its responses to proposed solutions to the conflict. Some parties in conflict are likely to be more resilient to such approaches than others, and in Colombia it was pointed out that the guerrilla groups have shown themselves to be fairly unmoved by international pressure. However even when sanctions and incentives do have an influence on the protagonists, it is arguable that such measures are unlikely to be self sustaining if not applied in light of a wider and more comprehensive peacemaking strategy. While such measures may encourage the parties to temporarily de-escalate military activities or to attend peace talks, their effectiveness is likely to decline if other strategies are not developed which engage more fundamentally with both the issues in dispute and the relationships between the protagonists.² Third parties who are able to offer new insights and perspectives on these two levels may find that the parties become more open to listening to their ideas. This may be because the protagonists realize the third party understands their interests and is willing to help them to find ways to satisfy these, albeit alongside the interests of their opponents. The civil society monitoring mission in Mindanao was able to show all parties that effective monitoring would help the process and so their continuing participation was welcomed.

2. The role of sanctions, conditionalities and incentives in peace processes is being explored in greater detail in a forthcoming Accord publication – see www.c-r.org for more details

One partner cautioned that third parties should be alert to the time when they are no longer useful and their influence is no longer accepted, and at that point it might be better to withdraw. In some circumstances they may be most helpful by accepting responsibility for failures in the process (even if they are not directly responsible) and withdraw allowing the parties to start again without mutual recriminations over the failures.

Practice / Policy points

- Third parties cannot rely on all the information they are given by the parties and so they must listen and find out all they can without reaching categorical conclusions.
- It is more important to analyse why something is being said rather than deciding to believe it or not.
- Third parties have no right to be accepted and listened to and they have to demonstrate that they are relevant and useful.
- Third parties using sanctions and incentives to influence the behaviour of the protagonists should be alert to their limitations and consider how such instruments can be complemented by other approaches.
- Helping parties to re-think the issues for themselves can be a more sustainable approach than persuading parties to change against their own underlying assumptions.
- Third parties need to be alert to the possibility that they are no longer useful and in those circumstances decide if they should withdraw.

Safety and security

Conflict is a risky environment and acting as a third party exposes one to personal threat and vilification. While at a personal level physical threat is more serious, for an organization or state, disparagement and denigration are also serious threats to its ability to function in other spheres. Some interlocutors may respect the third party, value its involvement and offer a level of protection, but others may see it as a threat and take action to neutralize that threat by whatever means are available. Or one party may lose trust in the third party or fear the knowledge it has gained and want it removed from the conflict.

Third parties rely on public and international support to dissuade attacks on them. Religious institutions are a strong bulwark for their members though priests talked of being threatened. An NGO said that it relied on local leaders for its security and of course religious institutions are deeply rooted in many communities. One priest who was threatened said that his "strategy is to run after the

militants." His parishioners know where they are and who is involved, so he can go to their camps and talk to the commanders about why they are threaten the staff. It may be possible to demonstrate to the commanders the value of the work that the church group is doing.

Unofficial third parties are at greater risk than official third parties because they have less status and may have less backing from other more powerful or respected organizations. Internal third parties are even more at risk because they are more accessible to those who might want to silence them, though they may be more alert to dangers. Risks are not only limited to the third party itself; it can place at risk the people with whom it is working. Most vulnerable are members of the local communities where the conflict is taking place and non-governmental organizations working on the conflict, as they do not have patrons who can support them and offer some measure of protection. Therefore they can be killed or intimidated virtually with impunity. The UNDP/ University of the Philippines study on "Learning Experiences on Civil Society Peace Building" noted that threats to peaceworkers and affected communities are an important factor hindering their work. Interaction between local community groups and international organizations can be an important source of protection for local peaceworkers, if managed sensitively and appropriately.

One workshop participant questioned his own responsibility for the death of a local community member who spoke critically to him and his colleagues about the behaviour of forces allied to the government authorities. His evidence was shared and subsequently he was murdered. It showed how a fact-finding mission was not itself targeted but its informants were at risk. A local community resident is often more threatening to militant groups / state forces if he or she reveals what is happening not only because the person speaks with authority but also because he or she could become a model for other community members to follow.

Practice / Policy points

- Third parties need to be as aware as any of the parties of the risks in a situation and how to minimize those risks. Naivety does not provide protection.
- It is important to analyse in what way one may appear to be a threat to any of the parties and assess if that perception is unavoidable in order to fulfil the third-party role.
- A third party can gain some protection from the status of one's own organization, from international support, from public opinion or from the parties themselves.
- Support is always conditional. It can be removed and it may restrict the freedom of action of the third party
- Being able to identify the source of threats and having the capacity to interact with those people is helpful, though not easy.
- Having a useful contribution to make and being able to demonstrate usefulness are important sources of protection.
- Third parties need to be concerned not only about their own security but also alert that they may be putting their interlocutors at risk.
- International actors should consider how their strategies for engagement with civil society organizations can increase the operational space available to these actors and enhance their security in an insecure environment.

Relating to the community

While conflicts take place between nations, organizations and communities, and mediators may act on behalf of states and communities, the actual work is done by individuals. Such individuals can be faced with enormous problems in how they relate to the community from which they come or which they may represent, and to the communities and peoples that are engaged in the conflict.

This dilemma can manifest itself in a number of ways for internal third parties. Their own community may on one level admire the efforts that are being made but on the other hand they may fear being dragged more closely into the conflict or they may be critical of the actions that are being taken, contacts that are being made and the outcome that is beginning to emerge. Because the process may be discreet their assumptions may not in fact be accurate. Is it the role of a community leader to lead his or her society or reflect it? As one activist noted, the people in a community may not always be as committed to peace and peacemaking as is the activist.

The tensions for religious leaders were noted because they may have a desire to reach out to the hostile parties, based on their religious commitment, but their

community may resent this as a distraction and expect that their only role is to serve the community directly. Experiences were shared of how in the Catholic Church the tension is greater for priests from the local diocese who have to serve a wide area and who are clearly responsible to their diocese. Priests from religious orders have somewhat more freedom to engage in peacemaking as they are firstly responsible to their order and the order will have placed a team of them to work together and share the duties.

External third parties normally have fewer problems with their own community but face acute challenges in relating to the societies in which they are intervening. However, unlike some internal third parties, they can exercise a different degree of choice regarding their involvement in the conflict and ultimately whether they continue to be present in peacemaking initiatives. Depending on their characteristics (formal or informal, official or unofficial) they are likely to have varying levels of access to the parties involved and the society at large. Broadening this access beyond one's initial entry-points and widening one's understanding of the conflict are both challenging and crucial tasks. While one or more of the parties may know the external third party directly and have some degree of confidence in their activities, there will be other parties who do not have this attitude. The third party may appear a shadowy figure that comes and goes; its presence creates tensions because it may signal that some deal is about to be completed. This tension may be heightened by a perception that the external third party has overshadowed their initiative, or in its dealings with the community has marginalized particular actors or groups from the peace process. When the third party tries to communicate directly with the wider community, which may already be suspicious of the outsider and committed to their leaders, they will reject anything that is hostile or critical and in the process will reject the third party as well.

In addition the third party may not have a common language or common frame of reference, as will be discussed in the next section. Participants in Colombia noted that it was important for international actors and institutions to have effective strategies for communicating about their intentions. This was seen as enabling useful exchanges about the relevance of interventions and as having the positive consequence of increasing accountability for actions carried out. However the challenge of communicating with a wider community is not only relevant to external actors. One NGO in Mindanao said that one of its key challenges was to develop means to communicate and disseminate information not only at the local level but between the local level and the national and international levels. In the Caucasus, NGOs used the media to try to communicate with the other community and help to increase mutual understanding.

Practice / Policy points

- The third party needs to be alert to the possibility that tensions will develop with the third party's own community and negative perceptions may develop.
- The third party also needs to be alert to the implications if the communities in conflict are aware of its involvement without understanding what is being done.
- The third party can be sensitive to the possibility that its involvement overshadows or reduces the participation of members of the community in any peace initiative.
- In both cases the third party can partly deal with criticism and suspicion by finding ways to allow it to be expressed and then responding to the concerns.

Frames of analysis for addressing the conflict

Third parties are often very different from the parties in the conflict. A third party may come from the other side of the world and speak a different language. Its culture and life experience may be completely different. In relating to all the relevant communities the importance of cultural sensitivity was stressed. One NGO spoke of the need to adapt to the socio-cultural context. In principle it should be easier for an internal third party to understand and relate to the local context. However they may have lost touch with their own community and not be alert to the impact of their behaviour because they believe they are culturally sensitive.

Some cultural differences may be obvious, but others may be more subtle and even a third party from the local community may be different in significant ways which affects their capacity to interact with the parties to the conflict. The very fact that they want to undertake a third-party role may be a sign that they have a very different view of conflict. Some come from other places which have been very peaceful societies in living memory or from places which have suffered from major wars, and either experience may lead them to reject conflict and to believe that any peace is better than conflict. In contrast, their interlocutors accept the necessity of conflict and use of force, even if they regret it, and show this in their actions. The third party may also find it difficult to understand the issues that led to the conflict and to understand why the issue was so important that it justified killing.

These differences also lead to different views of what would constitute peace. For some third parties, peace will mean the absence of violence and fighting, but for the parties themselves that is not enough and they will want their concerns addressed as part of any settlement. They are unlikely to be willing to end the conflict at any

cost and might expect it to be based on a return to the old system (if they are the government), or a new egalitarian system (a revolutionary movement), or it could be the establishment of strong government (the state or revolutionary movement), or greater devolution (an ethnic minority), or partition of the state (secessionist movement), or a new harmonious relationship with the land (the indigenous people). One could think of many other possibilities and if the third party cannot relate to these possible different perspectives and focuses only on the absence of fighting, then the parties will remain suspicious. These tensions will be less severe with a more detached third party than one that is more involved in developing the peace process.

Even when the third party recognizes the grounds for the demands of each side, and knows that they cannot be ignored because they are so important for the parties, it can be somewhat constrained in acknowledging the legitimacy of some positions. Official third parties in particular normally have to respect existing states and agreements that are recognized by international law and therefore cannot endorse outcomes which would violate existing structures unless by agreement. Unofficial third parties can be more flexible. One way to avoid this dilemma is to acknowledge the legitimacy of the aspirations of the parties but also acknowledge that it is not acceptable to try to achieve them by force.

The parties may also have very different views of the nature of the state and they may clash with the understanding of the third party. Non-state parties may find it difficult to understand the strategies of the states or state involved and their reluctance to compromise on accepted principles of governance. Or the parties may have a very different understanding of the nature of dissent and possibility of dissent with the state and may not understand the perspective of a militant group that feels that armed force is their only option for expressing their dissent. However to be able to communicate with the parties to the conflict it is necessary to be able to appreciate the different perspectives that they bring to the situation and to understand that their experiences tell them that their perspectives are correct and the third party's perspective is naïve. The third party has to work within the parties' worldview in order to challenge it and suggest that an alternative approach would be more effective and serve the parties' interests better.

A power-based bargaining approach is only marginally concerned with understanding these different perspectives and uses inducements and threats to try to get the parties to reach a deal. Therefore if the issues are not too important and the inducements and threats are significant it may be effective. However since in most conflicts the issues are very important to the parties, one can quickly come up against the limits of the

effectiveness of inducements and threats, as can be seen from the intractability of many conflicts. On the other hand, a conflict resolution approach works to clarify the parties' concerns and therefore is more sensitive to the parties' frameworks of thinking and helps them to develop alternative frameworks. It was also said that a conflict resolution approach encourages a more informal element to inter-group relations and it takes the dispute back to a human level or a needs-based level.

However the conflict resolution approach stands outside and challenges the traditional assumptions about politics held by most parties in conflict – such as the nature of legitimacy, winning/losing, the role of power and popular participation/elite decision-making. As such it offers an alternative way to solve problems when competitive style politics does not work but it equally raises the suspicions of conventional politicians and soldiers. This then raises the question of how one shows that this approach works, if one believes it is more likely to bring about a resolution of the conflict. Alternatively it may be more straightforward to help the parties to consider how their approaches are already failing. Fundamentally it is important to understand the nature of political bargaining and the use of force, even when it is not able to resolve the conflicts in which the parties are involved.

Practice / Policy points

- All third parties including internal third parties need to be alert to the possibility that they can be insensitive in the local socio-cultural context.
- To be able to communicate with the parties to the conflict it is necessary to be able to appreciate the different perspectives that they bring to the situation, even though these may not be acceptable to the third party.
- The commitment of a third party to peaceful resolution of the conflict may in itself create a gap with the assumption about the necessity of force among the protagonists. The third party needs to explore any suspicions about the impact of this alternative approach.
- Different views of a satisfactory outcome will reflect different socio-cultural perspectives and these differences need to be acknowledged.

Dealing with stalemate

Third parties are often frustrated when the parties are not open to a settlement. They are unwilling to engage in talks or their involvement is meaningless. In the meantime the general public is suffering. It is important for the third party to remember this is the nature of

conflict and that patience is necessary. But in these circumstances, the third party may lose sight of its role and there is a temptation to take on responsibility and feel that there must be something that can be done. Something can always be done but they may only be small steps with no guarantee that they will lead to large steps. As one participant in Colombia noted, "sometimes it is necessary to take the initiative; but on many other occasions it is necessary to be very cautious and even silent... The mediator or facilitator is not an additional negotiator and balance is his or her cardinal virtue. They need to have tremendous empathy with the social and human situation to be addressed, but must always remember that they are not part of it..."

Ultimately the responsibility lies with the party or parties who refuse to engage. From that party's point of view there are good reasons for the stance it has taken and the appropriate role for the third party who has access to that party may be to understand that stance and help to evaluate if it is counterproductive. Equally the third party in touch with the other parties to the conflict can help them to understand their opponents' intransigent stance and explore with them if they can help their opponent to adopt an alternative approach.

Practice / Policy points

- Third parties need to avoid the temptation to feel responsible if the parties are not ready to engage with each other.
- Third parties can in these circumstances explore with the parties why they are unwilling to engage and what might help to open up the situation.
- Even in a stalemate there are often small steps which can be taken and these may move the situation towards engagement in a peace process.

5. Conclusion

Many of the people whom we met are committed to facilitating peace processes in their regions where they are involved. They have made and are making important contributions with insight and expertise. Some of them are idealistic but as can be seen from the ideas in this paper they are also realistic about what they can do and what can be achieved. They have their interests and agendas, as well as their dreams and their optimism but many are willing to examine what they and the conflicting parties are doing critically and rigorously and make adjustments to their approach as a result. Perhaps the underlying lesson from their experience is the need to blend strong idealism with strong realism and to combine optimism with critical pessimism.

About CR

Conciliation Resources (CR) works to prevent violence, promote justice and transform armed conflict into opportunities for development.

CR's goals are to:

- Support people working at local, national and international levels to develop effective solutions to social, economic and political problems related to violent conflicts.
- Provide opportunities for inclusive dialogue and improved relationships within communities and across conflict divides at all social and political levels.
- Influence governments and other decision-makers to employ conflict transformation policies that promote alternatives to violence.
- Improve peacemaking practice and policies by promoting learning from peace processes around the world.
- Challenge stereotypes and increase public awareness of human rights, conflict and peace issues in divided societies.

CR works mainly in the Caucasus, Fiji, Uganda and West Africa in partnership with local and international civil society organizations and governments, and publishes *Accord: an international review of peace initiatives*. Many Accord issues have been translated into other languages and all issues are available on CR's website, www.c-r.org/accord, where print copies can also be ordered.

The Comparative Learning Project

CR aims to maximize the practical value of its Accord series through sharing the publications' findings with people directly involved in peace processes. In cooperation with partners in Colombia and the Philippines, CR translates and publishes relevant Accord articles and co-organizes a series of discussions on key issues in the peace processes. These activities enable the hard-won experiences of conflict transformation to be shared across the world, as well as ensuring that CR's work is informed by ongoing practical challenges. The insights emerging from this process are published in a series of 'reflections' papers for practitioners and policymakers, of which this document is one example.

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