

Mainstreaming Conflict Resolving Approaches

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Recently, United Nations Secretary-General BAN Ki-moon stressed explicitly that the Millennium Development Goals “embody the rights of each person on the planet to health, education, shelter and security”. However, while health and education are Millennium Development Goals, “shelter and security” are not goals on their own. They are not even mentioned, probably, because there’s hardly a way to measure “security”. That would mean to measure peace.

But the link between development and individual security, or better: the nexus between development and peace nowadays is more important than ever. This is why one can state that there is no development without peace!

Prepared for our last year conference in Montreal, the paper “Opportunities and challenges for international volunteer co-operation” stated, that during the last decades, many of personnel cooperation organizations have reoriented themselves to respond to new global challenges and

changing circumstances. The DED, as a personnel service organisation, which this year commemorates its 45-year anniversary, had to respond to new trends any time in its history. One of the greatest challenges was to find ways to consider the influence of conflicts in our strategy for our work in development cooperation. But we found out, that our feature enables us to integrate conflict resolution as a part of our development cooperation mandate: we decided to concentrate our work on the local and regional level, whereas German development banks and technical agencies find their partners mainly on the national level. We are, where peace building can unveil its full potential, because only when there are satisfactoring living conditions on the local level democracy and peace will get a chance.

Sometimes I am surprised that within the concepts and strategies of modern development cooperation, the inevitable connection between peace and development is often not taken into account adequately. As I mentioned, the Millennium Development Goals do not mention peace as a unique aim for international development cooperation, perhaps because the aims have been formulated too technically. The background may be also that it is assumed, that conflicts can be avoided through the reduction of poverty.

Extreme poverty is a major cause, and predictor, of violence is a widespread and very wellknown conviction not only in the development world.

Looking on the long history of nations rising and the lapse of conflicts it is no question that this connection is existing so that we can find one reason, although it may not be the only one, but most probably the most important reason for a peaceful environment is poverty reduction. The development agencies can no longer split the duties into conflict resolution, implemented by military action and poverty reduction done by the volunteers whether are called peace corps or may have other names.

A common and obvious unintelligent way is to react to conflicts militarily and to start with development cooperation only in succession. Our now already ten years of experience tells us that development cooperation makes also sense and can be successful, when there are still conflicts unsolved. To solve development inhibiting conflicts is even a part of the development work altogether.

We found out, that we could be able to play a stabilizing role even in countries, where ongoing tension or post-conflict situations call for an adequate contribution of

civil and civic engagement right from the beginning. This is why the DED is active in countries like Afghanistan, Zimbabwe, Mindanao, Guatemala, Ruanda and Cambodia, to name a few.

As we all know, peace is necessary, at least as an objective, to ensure development of civil societies, but - and this is important to keep in mind - peace is a constant process.

It requires peaceful behaviour of people in their daily interactions. The struggle for peace and the fight against poverty are linked very closely. The link between development work and accompanying peace processes is important, because it is a challenge to maintain peace instead of conducting war even if it comes to the question of allocation of scarce resources.

As new as the nexus between peace and development seems to be, peaceful conflict resolution strategies are not new at all. Former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali launched the *Agenda for Peace* already in 1992. Since then, the importance of conflict prevention and peacebuilding has steadily increased. At the end of the 1990s it became clear that an effective transformation of different conflicts need a comprehensive approach, especially including development cooperation. While vio-

lent conflicts ravage many countries and lead to death and destruction, development cooperation struggles to do the opposite. To break the vicious circle of underdevelopment and armed conflicts is undoubtedly one of the greatest challenges of the upcoming decades, as we have not only learned from the adventure, called war in Iraq.

War in Afghanistan, attacks in Lebanon, the national crisis in Zimbabwe bring back to mind, that the international community has to act much earlier instead of reacting when conflicts have already become armed. And the answer cannot only come from the Security Council. That means for the development community: to support confidence building measures, reinforce dialogue structures between conflicting parties, address the non-material aspects of conflicts and promote locally adapted mechanisms of civil conflict transformation.

Peace building means prevention and resolution of armed conflicts and the consolidation of peace when violence has been reduced. After that post-conflict reconstruction may help to avoid a relapse into violence.

But we have to say that civil conflict prevention as an objective of development cooperation puts more than a spotlight on the political dimension. Political systems and structures have to be assessed in terms of their capacity for nonviolent transformation of conflicts, for example

concerning land ownership and use of land. This exactly is a point out of many more, when development cooperation can enter the process, especially personnel cooperation, because a nonviolent transformation of conflicts is not at all only a financial matter.

Personnel cooperation on a long term base is also the adequate mean to peace building, because conflict prevention is a constant challenge. It demands the collaboration and dialogue of all actors at all levels. Mainly the civil society plays a crucial role here not least as they have the greatest interest in sustaining peace. Recognizing this already almost ten years ago, the German government launched the civil peace service program in 1999 in close cooperation with the DED, which has a vast experience with civil society. In a former meeting of IVCO some years ago I had already the opportunity to present this then new and additional instrument of Germany's development cooperation. But I presume that today there will be some new friends around the table so that I will explain in a few sentences the contents.

Civil Peace Service sponsors non-governmental organizations to promote non-violent mechanisms for resolving conflicts. Since then, the German Development Service sends out teams of experts, deploys local specialists and promotes local organizations. They help to dismantle structural causes of conflict and selectively promote non-violent mechanisms for resolving conflicts. Where political conditions permit, the Civil Peace Service is particularly active in helping resolve both regional and even national conflicts at local level through discourse between partners – but never by itself. It is rather an instrument of international politics, diplomacy and development policy designed to assure people that there is always a civil alternative for transforming conflicts.

National interests may not be separated from the joint responsibility for peace worldwide. In this situation, cooperation between the governments and their civil societies is vital. Civil society actors play an important role in the nonviolent transformation of conflicts, particularly where the state is fragile. Peaceful development and nonviolent conflict transformation always entail lengthy learning processes and behavioural change on the part of all stakeholders in the system. The aim is to make maximum use of the scope for peace building. As an additional instrument of development

cooperation, the Civil Peace Service can specifically promote such processes from outside through professional personnel collaboration with partner organisations and the assignment of local experts. This is why the German government cites the Civil Peace Service as the most important policy instrument for promoting the peace building capabilities of civil society in its Action Plan for Civil Crisis Prevention.

International actors as the UN Security Council try to align peace and military security. Regional African organisations as the African Union (AU) play an increasing role for ensuring universal peace and international security. G8 partners support the commissioning of an African peacekeeping force and the further development of a peace and security architecture for the continent. Only in relation with coherent contribution of foreign, economy, finance or security policy on national and international level and with a close cooperation of additional actors in the different conflict regions Civil Conflict Prevention can become reality. The advantage of the Civil Peace Service instrument is that many civil society actors are able to work **in addition** to state initiatives and independent from state integration on different levels in society.

If many little people in many little places do many little deeds they can change the face of the earth, as an African proverb goes.

At the regional and local level, Civil Peace Service builds or strengthens capacity such as networks and committees. In the long run, the intent is to influence institutional change, such as new administrative provisions or laws. This way, the Civil Peace Service can help from the bottom up to improve the conditions for successful political-diplomatic negotiations, consolidate progress made and reduce the probability of a new outbreak of violence. The vision of Civil Peace Service is to promote a “positive peace”, an idea that is closely connected with the ideal of “justice”. Positive peace aims not only at the absence of physical violence but also at introducing further education and strengthening participative and inclusive structures to prevent the outbreak of physical force in the long run.

In Niger for example, the conflicts related to the use of land and water resources are rising. UN Secretary-General’s Special Advisor on conflict, Jan Egeland, called the Sahel region of West Africa “ground zero” for vulnerable communities to adapt to climate change. While in Sudan and Chad the same conflicts have already

escalated, in Niger the Civil Peace Service launched programmes in order to promote confidence building and dialogue structures between local and regional conflicting parties. They need support in learning to define and represent its interests. All parties involved should have the power to help shape their own lives and the social factors determining how they live. One of the crucial outcomes of the empowerment of individual groups should be to strengthen the structures, where interests can be represented without violence and balanced out against the interests of others.

But the Civil Peace Service is not reinforcing and building up the communication and negotiating skills of conflicting parties, it is also promoting the overcoming the mental aftermath of collective violence. As time progresses, violent conflicts develop a momentum of their own which makes it ever more difficult to escape from an upward spiral of violence and counter-violence. Experiencing collective violence and passing on the memories to successive generations helps to produce and perpetuate prejudices. Here in **Cambodia**, the DED assists joint plaintiffs at the **Khmer Rouge Tribunal**, which contributes to the reconciliation of Cambodian society and strengthens its justice system. Thanks to our today present country director Mr. Wolfgang Möllers, this programme in accompanying the

Khmer Rouge Tribunal is one of the most challenging and most sophisticated programmes of the DED.

Mr. Moellers had the idea to place experts not directly at the Khmer Rouge Tribunal, but in the proximity of the tribunal. The DED promotes educational and information measures, before policies operating on principles of the past give the conflict a life of their own. This way it helps to avoid propaganda, prejudices, fears and aggressions, which could lay the groundwork for future, self-perpetuating violence. This is because merely remedying the original causes is ultimately not enough to resolve the conflict. Cooperation work needs to accord significantly more importance to this aspect, in addition to the attention given to the structural causes of conflicts.

In many cases, traditions of nonviolent conflict transformation exist which can return after the cessation of civil wars and collective violence. In other cases, it is possible to develop adapted methods and mechanisms of civil conflict transformation in response to local circumstances and which address the specific nature of the conflict. This approach is not transferring specific methods. It is reinforcing the ubiquitous basic desire, wherever it is possible to do so, to settle conflicts in harmony with local structures and traditions and without using violence.

The DED is promoting effective projects in a minor scale that do not claim to force the German view to the partners in the south or to take the responsibility of violent conflicts away from the North. Quite a large number of Civil Peace Service measures are integrated in peace and development policy correlations inside Germany as is the case with the engagement for example in Afghanistan, Palestine and Sudan. Moreover, the unique experience and competences of the returning peace workers flow back to the public by events and publications and contribute to a necessary awareness building and dealing with conflicts in our own society.

We do not live in a world of linear causes and consequences. We do not know if development leads to a peaceful world or if peace is the indispensable premise for development. But we know that promoting both can at least help to solve conflicts in a peaceful way.