

SUMMARY

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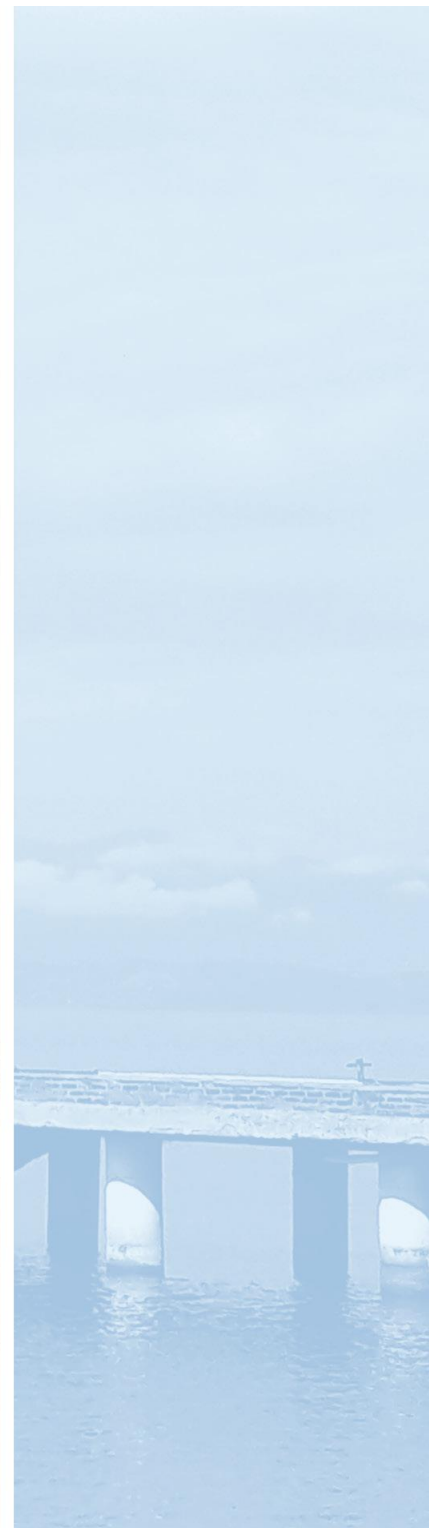
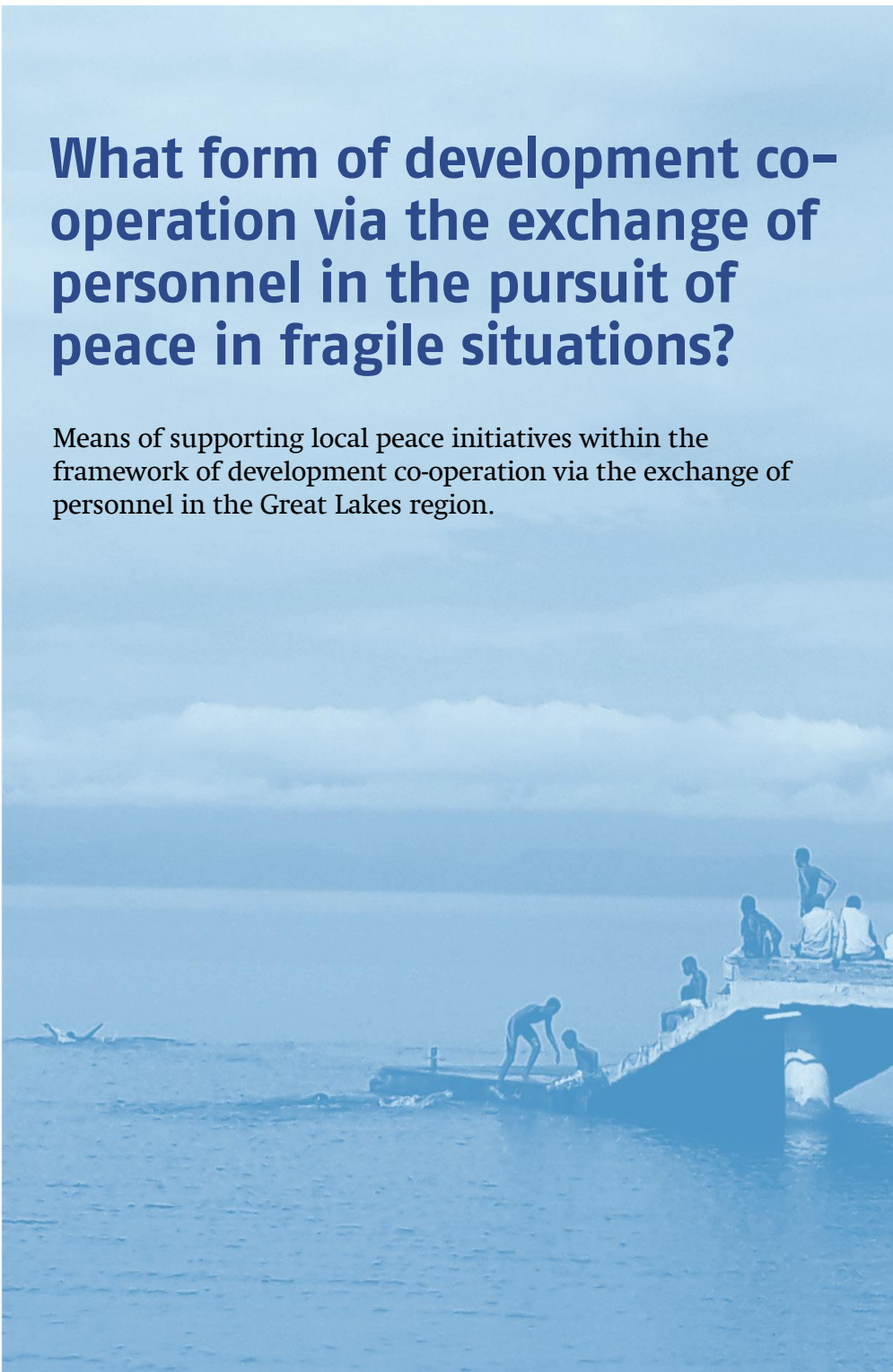
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What form of development co-operation via the exchange of personnel in the pursuit of peace in fragile situations?

Means of supporting local peace initiatives within the framework of development co-operation via the exchange of personnel in the Great Lakes region.





Carried out on behalf of Unité and Eirene Suisse by Jérôme Strobel

Implementation was possible thanks to the institutional partnership between Unité and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

The mission was conducted in November 2016 in Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

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List of acronyms

SDC:	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
DEP:	Development cooperation via the exchange of personnel
FDFA:	Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs
GL:	Great Lakes
SO:	Sending organisation
NGO:	Non-governmental organisation
PO:	Partner organisation
CSO:	Civil society organisation
DRC:	Democratic Republic of Congo
CPS:	Civil Peace Service

What form of development co-operation via the exchange of personnel in the pursuit of peace in fragile situations?

1. Framework of the study

The goal of this study is to evaluate the contribution to development co-operation via the exchange of personnel (International Development Service) in the pursuit of reinforcing local peace initiatives in a fragile situation and to identify the conditions of implementation likely to maximise the potential of such projects. This work was carried out in the Great Lakes region of Africa, in particular in Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Goma, in Northern Kivu, during October and November 2016. The activities studied are those of the DEP programme as practised by Unité, the Swiss platform of DEP organisations, one of the bodies for whom this study was carried out. This DEP model is aimed at developing capacity in the South in terms of individual skills and the development of organisations and networks to reduce poverty, improve social justice and promote peace. Its main means of action is the long-term assignment (2 to 3 years minimum) of Swiss professionals, also referred to as "volunteers", to partner organisations (POs) in the South. These professionals generally play a supporting and accompanying role to PO employees for the purpose of reinforcing capacity. The study focuses primarily on the activities carried out by Eirene Suisse (one of the bodies for whom this study was undertaken), but also looks at those carried out by other non-Swiss sending organisations. A dozen partner organisations were interviewed on the ground and a workshop was held in Switzerland with members of the Rwandan diaspora. This study is intended to contribute to the debate on the role of DEP within the framework of Swiss development cooperation policy, particularly in fragile situations.

2. Fragile situations

According to the OECD, "A fragile region or state has weak capacity to carry out basic functions, i.e. governance of its population and territory, and lacks the ability or political will to develop strong and constructive relations with society". This standard definition has recently been expanded to take account of the notion of risk and vulnerability. Fragility is not always synonymous with violence and physical conflict: a power invested with a high degree of authority may be capable of ensuring collective governance now, but the lack of democratic processes and constructive relations between social groups is a vulnerability factor for the future. Fragile situations are characterised by low predictability regarding future development of framework conditions, sometimes even in the short term.

The OECD has developed an analytical framework based on five aspects of fragility: economic, environmental, political, security-related and societal. In our view, the role played by individual psychological and emotional factors is critical: these are the factors that enable individuals to "grow and develop in a non-neurotic relationship with reality"¹ and to accept their differences in relation to others without resorting to violence. A society in which a large proportion of the population lacks personal psychological balance is a fragile society: in certain conditions, individual hate and violence may be transformed into collective hate and violence. Low self-esteem, victimisation, lack of recognition and difficulty in identifying personal perspectives all feed a sense of powerlessness that may in turn prompt individuals to seek refuge within a group representing security, where "others" are labelled as evil and recognised as enemies, or, ultimately, push them into succumbing to the temptations of an authoritarian regime.

Regarding the DEP programme in particular, we note four major challenges with regard to working in fragile situations:

1. POs' institutional capacity and ability to provide supervision
2. Volunteer safety, security and stress
3. Volunteer integration
4. Sustainability of action

3. Civil society and requirements in terms of reinforcement

By "civil society", we mean all structured citizens' initiatives outside the state and commercial framework, within which individuals organise themselves freely to express their particular vision of what is in the public interest and to promote ideal objectives based on this vision. Civil society organisations (SCO) are not representative microcosms of society, but groups of individuals who join forces to change society on the basis of their specific view of society. To this extent, they play a "political" role in the noble, societal sense of the term. Their democratic exemplarity is derived essentially from their "output legitimacy": through their concrete actions, are SCOs successful in demonstrating their willingness to serve the public interest as set out in their intervention strategy or theory of change?

In fragile situations, civil society organisations play an essential role in bringing together and mobilising society as a whole. The POs we met during this study are all working in some way to facilitate dialogue and manage conflict, both of which are indispensable elements of active democracy and enduring peace. They focus on "sensitive" subjects in order to create a critical culture of debate and negotiation. Due to their local presence and civil status, they are better placed than the authorities to carry out this sort of intra-personal work requiring the confidence of the individuals involved. And yet, despite a generally high ability to take action appropriate to local needs, the context weighs heavily on the shoulders of SCOs.

¹ Charles Rojzman, La nouvelle éducation démocratique: Pourquoi nous en sommes là?, Huffington Post, April 2017

We note that the isolation of these organisations remains a major challenge for the development of their activities and deployment of their impact. The lack of trust-based relations between POs working on the same issues is very real. In fragile situations characterised by inter-individual suspicion, the situation is not favourable to cooperation. Systematic networking activities should be undertaken with immediate effect, with a methodology that takes account of relational and emotional challenges across the persons involved. Furthermore, the problems involved in establishing relations of mutual trust between organisations are reflected in the relations between individuals within the organisations themselves. These instances of isolation can aggravate lack of self-confidence, thus discouraging initiative, rigidifying the internal operations of the organisations and hindering the development of an internal culture of debate. The presence of volunteers helps to reduce this isolation. Human exchange with persons from other horizons is a source of positive inspiration for different practices. It also improves the self-esteem of local workers who, generally speaking, lack feedback.

In environments with a reduced public domain, the very organisations seeking to promote dialogue, citizenship and pluralism are regularly suspected of political partisanship. Their work brings them into contact with highly sensitive issues and they are constantly required to demonstrate their independence in order to carry on working. The effort that POs have to invest in safeguarding their independence can consume large amounts of energy and resources. It is essential that funding providers and sending organisations (SO) take account of this in their partnership relations.

Contrary to a widely held view, POs do not need, as a priority, methodological tools to carry out and improve their core activities (e.g. holding discussion groups, peace education workshops, trauma management, etc.), which, generally speaking, they seem to have well under control. Partner organisations would like to see SOs provide help with support functions, i.e. the functions that are indispensable to the effective functioning of the organisation. Support function requirements are associated with financial management, institutional communication, project conception and fund raising. All things considered, these similarities in terms of support function requirements should, logically, prompt standardisation and even industrialisation of these processes in order to improve their efficacy. No move in this direction has been seen, however, or at least not amongst the organisations we met. Development of a simple tool for mapping and analysing processes within SCOs may assist in the rapid identification of support function requirements with the partner. In parallel, a simple best practices benchmark that POs should aim to achieve may assist them in working towards efficient support processes.

Generally speaking, it is striking how POs that have had the benefit of volunteer support point out, above all else, the importance of transmitting certain social skills of a "cultural" nature, all of which seem to focus on effective action. The added value delivered by the DEP programme also impacts at this level: by working together, we achieve a sort of "exchange by capillarity" at these more cultural, more diffuse levels than an exchange of technical skills that is difficult to measure. The DEP programme should not be limited to a bureaucratic approach – that is the message we are hearing from POs.

We encourage SOs to position their support offering in line with this: on the one hand, a primary offering in terms of support functions generally provided by long-term assignments of young, well-trained professionals of solid character with a heightened awareness of the issues associated with conflict transformation and consolidation of peace. On the other hand, a secondary offering of specific skills related to peace and conflict issues to be provided via short-term missions or South-North and South-South exchanges for

local personnel. We should listen to what the POs have to say: the methods and tools employed in consolidating peace, i.e. the "activity-related content", are their responsibility and their domain of competence above all.

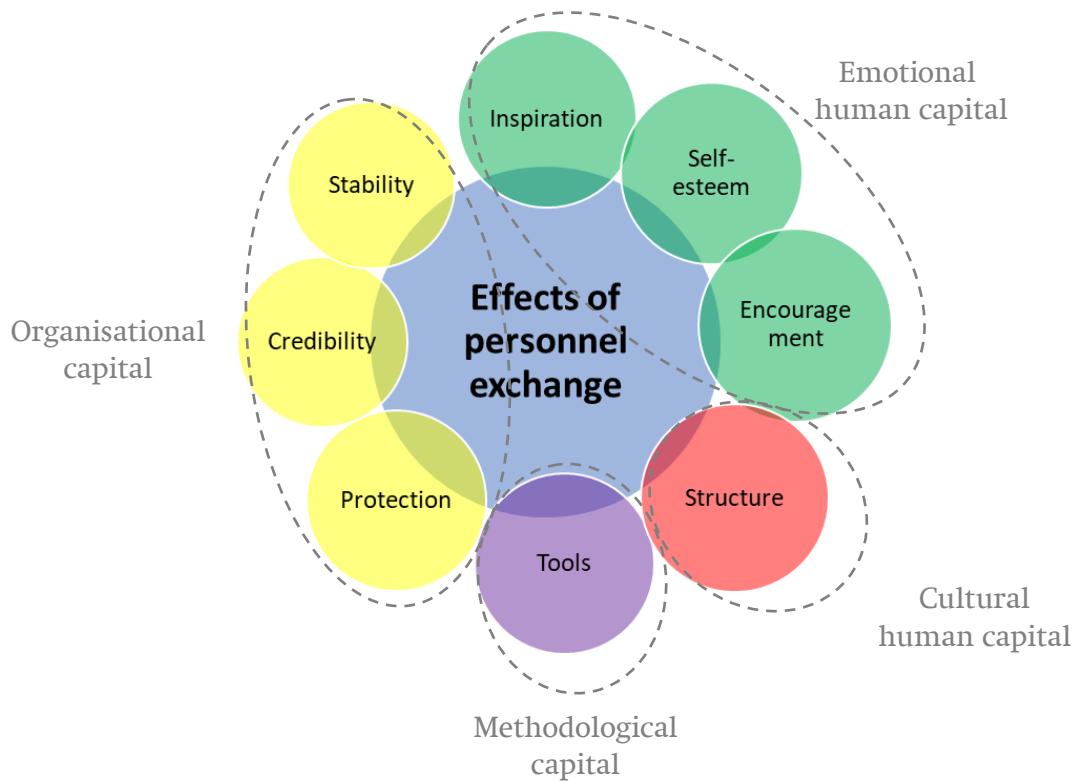
4. Impact of the DEP programme: mobilising and often unexpected

The interviews we carried out all show how everyone involved in the DEP programme is extremely interested in knowing the impact of DEP projects. The vast majority of impacts identified by interviewees primarily concern individuals ("human capital"), generally colleagues and those who work with volunteers, rather than institutions. They are not limited to long-term assignments only: complementary assignments (placements for young professionals, South-South exchanges, etc.) may also be vectors of beneficial changes.

The human impacts essentially take two forms: those at an individual emotional level ("emotional human capital") and those flowing from "cultural exchange by capillarity" ("cultural human capital"). By acting positively on these individual factors, the DEP programme proves itself to be a tool that is well suited to conflict transformation in fragile situations. Indirectly, the human impacts act on the organisations, strengthening their ability to take action. The evidence of these impacts is primarily qualitative and the impacts themselves are non-linear. Post-assignment impacts are often unexpected. Partly because this type of impact is very difficult to plan, but also because volunteers are often asked to carry out work not specified in the original mission. Let us be clear-sighted in this respect: unplanned work that delivers a big impact is more interesting than planned work that delivers little impact.

Numerous witness accounts (see report) document the following impacts:

- a) Benefits in terms of "**emotional human capital**": inspiration, improved self-esteem, encouragement
- b) Benefits in terms of "**cultural human capital**": structure and anticipation
- c) Benefits in terms of "**organisational capital**": credibility, protection, stability
- d) Benefits in terms of "**methodological capital**"



These impacts do not mean, however, that the DEP programme always delivers positive results! When SCOs work on DEP projects in fragile situations, they expose themselves to certain risks: risk of negative impact on their image if volunteers speak about organisations in bad terms, risk of deterioration of the partnership relation overall, risk of attracting inappropriate and unjustified attention by the authorities, who may lose trust in the PO's aims and activities.

The key success factors in maximising beneficial impact are:

- a) Quality of the process of immersion of the volunteer in local reality;
- b) Volunteer's ability to deal with the unexpected and his or her leadership aptitude in a given context;
- c) As SO: give greater priority to common goals and capitalisation of lessons learned rather than to planning of activities and impacts;
- d) Accompaniment by the SO throughout the assignment and capitalisation of know-how acquired during assignments;
- e) Be modest! Do not overestimate the benefits delivered by the North

5. The partnership relation: crucial but fragile

Within the paradigm of the DEP programme, the partnership is the cornerstone of the SO's contribution to transforming society and promoting peace. In a fragile situation where civil society organisations are themselves fragile, the choice of partner and the manner in which the partnership is envisaged should be approached with caution.

Paradoxically, critical mass is not always a guarantee of improved sustainability of action for SCOs operating in fragile situations. An organisation of a certain size naturally has a greater capacity for influence, a bigger reputation and better control of pilot and support functions, and these factors all make it more solid. In practice, however, these organisations remain highly dependent on one or a small number of leaders. The fragility of large organisations is also due to their exposure at a public level: their high influence and visibility place them permanently under the spotlight.

Numerous small organisations that we visited in Rwanda appear to have great potential for development (resulting from their foothold, legitimacy, association with a well-known personality, mastery of tools, capacity for innovation, etc.). In a landscape where civil society is deficient in numerous ways, SOs also have a role to play in helping to strengthen the "civil society eco-system", i.e. to facilitate development of full potential. (The situation is quite different in Northern Kivu where numerous small organisations are "kleptomaniac NGOs".) The support provided by an SO to a small organisation under development can have a very big beneficial impact. The risk of failure is also substantial. In the majority of cases, the support given to small organisations is not enough to mobilise a volunteer on a full-time basis. This is why flexible means must be implemented in order to help small organisations to develop: either by limited delegation of one volunteer assigned to a large organisation, assignment of one volunteer to several small organisations or support in the form of services provided by a local coordinator.

We have seen that the impact of these missions is real and sometimes far-reaching, but not always totally foreseeable ahead of the partnership. The conditions on the ground are not the same as the conditions in Switzerland! The contextual framework conditions and the internal structure of the organisations themselves may change rapidly at times, prompting a revision of needs and priorities. Flexible support is both a prerequisite of the success of DEP projects and one of its main added values compared to other forms of cooperation. To make it effective and beneficial for everyone concerned, flexible action must be guided with regard to the broad direction to be adopted: ahead of assignments, it is essential to establish a very clear framework for collaboration requiring explicit commitment by partners to common goals of cooperation. Post-assignment, flexibility also requires periods of joint in-depth evaluation and greater effort in terms of monitoring and joint capitalisation of lessons learned and impacts identified. These stages will ensure that the partnership between PO and SO is placed in a timeframe that extends beyond the assignment itself. We believe that implementing a "system for ensuring continuity of partnership" is a prerequisite of flexible action, which in turn allows us to best meet the needs of POs in the fragile situation in which they operate.

Ideally, in a fragile situation, contextual analysis should be performed by the partners jointly, and should constitute one of the cornerstones of the partnership. Whether for SOs or POs, this analysis has a strategic aspect. It provides an indispensable base on which to build appropriate intervention strategies and capitalise on regional know-how. It also provides an operational tool for managing risk and ensuring volunteer security.

More broadly, contextual analyses performed in participative workshops form a basis for work that mobilises (and strengthens) skills dedicated to peace. We suggest that DEP organisations should base their joint context analysis processes on their known fragilities. To this end, this report includes a proposal for a simplified framework for fragility analysis. In practice, given that institutional frameworks are less enduring and the framework conditions more volatile, the frequency of analysis must be sufficiently high. As sources of information are less plentiful and less trustworthy, contextual analyses must also draw on alternative sources of information, which implies, for the purpose of verification, that sources be cross-referenced and a critical, vigilant attitude be maintained at all times. Furthermore, rumour is a widespread social phenomenon: organisations should be particularly attentive when assessing information and should remember the general lack of a culture of critical analysis based on fact when talking to others.

6. Supervision of assignments in fragile situations

Compared to more traditional development cooperation projects, those involving the exchange of personnel require implementation of a special system of preparation, monitoring and evaluation. While the DEP programme is a means of facilitating autonomy and strengthening local dynamics of change – the same as other forms of projects – it goes hand in hand with rather specific challenges due to major involvement of interpersonal human exchange. Assignments in fragile situations necessitate the implementation of adequate and reinforced means of supervision:

- Identify candidates with an ability to deal with the unexpected.
- Place responsibility for volunteers with partner organisations: in contexts that are more fragile than elsewhere, the guidance of volunteers by the PO is a determining factor in his or her personal immersion and well-being over and above his or her occupational integration.
- Give priority to ongoing management of needs over strict pre-assignment planning: given contextual constraints, we prefer to keep pre-assignment volunteer task lists deliberately vague. Volunteers should be seen to be active upon arrival, however, to avoid possible misunderstandings with regard to his or her degree of commitment and to meet the partner organisation's needs. Terms of reference should then be documented as part of ongoing management of needs.
- Safety and security: in a fragile environment, safety and security obviously pose a greater challenge than elsewhere. Effective safety and security management should be based on surveillance drawing on a combination of traditional sources of information and information gathered from networks. It is very important that volunteers are in contact with as many experienced persons as possible, from as many different horizons as possible. Responsibility for safety and security lies essentially with the PO, and the PO must be fully aware of this.
- The importance of a wide intercultural perspective: intercultural preparation for volunteers and POs is crucial in advance of assignments, as is monitoring of this parameter during the assignment. Preparation and monitoring should address both positive and negative aspects.

- A minimum standard of material comfort, psychological well-being and security: we advise pragmatism in applying the principles of voluntary work in fragile situations. We believe some modifications to living conditions are essential to ensure the physical safety and psychological well-being of volunteers.
- Guarantee transparency and consultation in mission evaluation: SOs must guarantee transparency and consultation in the evaluation of missions and their impact on partnerships. Failures can – and do – occur, and POs are apprehensive about potentially serious repercussions. Reassurance must be provided in the form of clear and structured rules for joint evaluation procedures.
- Implement robust mechanisms for the transmission of know-how: these mechanisms constitute a special challenge in a fragile situation where support provided to the PO by the SO may more easily be interrupted than elsewhere. We advise setting up a coherent, formal framework for the management of know-how by means of "systems for ensuring the continuity of partnerships" between PO and SO.

We suggest that Unité should consider setting up a backstopping structure by grouping together certain of its member organisations operating in similar fragile environments such as Central and Eastern Africa, for example. The goal is to help the SOs who work with Unité to provide some of the additional "services" that have to be performed to maximise the effectiveness of the work done under the DEP programme in fragile situations: facilitate joint contextual analysis, ensure security surveillance, organise and hold workshops for discussion between volunteers and POs, write publications and carry out part of the work involved in managing know-how.

7. Relations with funding organisations

Basically, we can distinguish two types of funding organisms on the basis of their relationship with those on the ground where they provide project financing: "generalist donors" and "specialist donors". Generally speaking, when DEP organisations are funded by generalist donors, there is a natural offset between the SO and the donor with respect to the ability to analyse the context. Yet analysis of context is a crucial element in setting up projects in fragile situations, and may have repercussions on project design and cost. With this type of donor, funding decisions tend to be more unpredictable, and there is a greater risk that support will be discontinued in case of negative contextual development. Funding channels should be diversified to mitigate these risks.

"Specialist donors" view the involvement of volunteers in POs in a positive light: the presence of these "Western cultural elements" is reassuring and there is recognition that civil society organisations require some assistance with financial management. As the assistance provided by SOs can improve relations between donors and civil society organisations, opportunities for win-win collaboration between SOs and specialist donors could be envisaged.

We also note varying levels of support for the DEP programme from government bodies in fragile situations. When the terms of funding are strict, as is the case for Unité organisations financed by Swiss cooperation², there is a risk that the additional resources re-

² Funding limited to 50% maximum.

quired to guarantee the effectiveness of DEP systems aimed at transforming conflict in fragile situations will not be raised. This may be counter-productive given the benefits delivered by the DEP programme in fragile situations.

8. The diaspora: a player that should be involved

Many members of the diaspora have acquired the sort of experience and skills likely to make a positive contribution to the task of reinforcing local organisations. Conversely, the experience acquired on the ground by agents for peace could prove useful in facilitating greater cohesion and understanding within the diasporas themselves, which are often divided in ways at odds with the dynamics experienced on the ground.

The Rwandan diaspora seems to be highly structured, inclusive and mobilised, but is in fact a "disparate diaspora" composed of both very active participants and those who leave the group and place themselves "under embargo". At the end of the day, many members of the diaspora remain frozen in the conflicts of the past, which justifies an approach aimed at transformation of conflict in these groups in Europe.

There is real potential for helping the younger disbanded members of the diaspora to rebuild a peaceful and constructive relationship with their country of origin. The initiatives undertaken by the authorities or associated organisations have difficulty in reaching them, however, due to enduring distrust and rifts. That is why, drawing on their legitimacy and neutrality, SOs that operate in the region are well placed to accompany a process of conflict transformation within the diaspora by mobilising young people who feel a sense of exclusion. This may be done via exchange workshops held in Switzerland, testimonial visits to Switzerland by Rwandans with specialist skills in conflict transformation or awareness-raising visits to Rwanda for these young people.

A second avenue consists in helping to structure the Great Lakes diaspora in Switzerland. As it is, the mobilisation of the Great Lakes diasporas – which is substantial in some cases – often fails to develop beyond the community itself. The fragmentation is two-pronged: between the diasporas of the Great Lakes region on the one hand, and between the diaspora and Switzerland on the other. The cultural proximity of the Great Lakes countries should facilitate collaboration between the Great Lakes diasporas with a view to promoting a common – but differentiated – culture in Switzerland.

Note that development of action with the diaspora will require funding to meet the substantial costs involved.

9. Conclusions

In fragile situations such as these, civil society organisations play an essential role in gathering together and mobilising society as a whole. The context weighs heavily on their shoulders, unfortunately. The POs have demonstrated their expertise in conflict management, trauma management and accompaniment of discussion groups. These organisations suffer from a sort of isolation, however, and often need to improve support functions (those that allow them to do their job). The DEP programme meets these needs

in an efficient manner and has very significant positive impacts at local level, in particular in human terms. Specific systems should be implemented in fragile contexts to ensure that the DEP programme can unfold its potential to best effect. Doing this comes at a cost that must be borne in mind.

10. Catalogue of recommended good practices

Our study is not limited to the activities of one organisation, so we will not make specific recommendations, but rather identify a catalogue of good practices to be encouraged within the framework of DEP programmes aimed at conflict transformation in fragile situations, such as that of the Great Lakes. These good practices should be maintained, reinforced, promoted and developed in line with each organisation's situation. Certain recommendations also apply to DEP missions in non-fragile situations. It is more important, however, to implement them in fragile environments where they may have a decisive impact on a successful outcome.

Regarding intervention strategy:

1. Consider the development of the "global ecosystem of civil society" as a strategic objective in its own right if, within the zone of activity, civil society is fragile in itself, as is frequently the case in fragile situations. That will involve, particularly in Rwanda, working with one or several large organisations to guarantee a high impact and satisfactory insertion within local professional conflict transformation organisations, while at the same time developing means of support for small organisations with high development potential (see following recommendation).
2. Implement a system for supporting small organisations with high development potential, as a priority via a delegation limited to one volunteer assigned to a large organisation and/or South-South exchanges.
3. Provide support to the POs focused on (a) a primary offer in terms of support functions delivered in the main by long-term assignments of young, well-trained professionals of resilient character with a high awareness of the issues involved in conflict transformation and consolidation of peace and (b) a secondary offer in the form of specific expertise in the areas of peace and conflict delivered by short-term missions or South-North and South-South exchanges for local personnel.
4. Develop an action plan with the diaspora from local zones of activity with a view to capitalising on their skills and facilitating conflict transformation in these zones. For Rwanda, develop a strategy for mobilising the demobilised diaspora and give priority to work aimed at getting young people involved. The broad lines of this strategy could be (a) discussion workshops held in Switzerland where one can talk openly about history and memories, (b) visits to Switzerland by Rwandans with specialist skills in conflict transformation to provide witness accounts of action undertaken in the field, helping to demystify fears about the current situation in Rwanda, (c) awareness-raising visits to Rwanda of approximately one month for groups of young people and (d) the option of individual DEP assignments to Rwanda.

Regarding methodology:

5. Facilitate flexible support to meet the challenges associated with the volatility inherent in fragile situations and the impact this has on the way in which POs operate. This means that SOs should attach greater importance to joint goals and capitalising on lessons learned than planning activities and impacts. It also implies that task lists to be completed by volunteers should necessarily remain "vague" and "ongoing management of needs" should take priority over strict planning of activities in advance.
6. Promote networking, decompartmentalisation and the creation of trust-based relations between civil society organisations. This implies acting with foresight and taking into account the fact that relations between organisations are affected by distrust and may sometimes even be termed "toxic". Appropriate systems to facilitate inter-individual trust must be implemented.
7. Make joint contextual analysis by SOs and POs a cornerstone of partnership discussion in order to (a) plan appropriate intervention strategies, (b) capitalise on regional know-how, (c) manage security risks and (d) mobilise and develop skills for peace.
8. Guarantee provision of long-term assistance to SOs for positive leverage of what the DEP programme can deliver in terms of added value over other forms of cooperation, i.e. close proximity with the challenges faced by POs and adequate, real-time responses to needs that may be vital for the organisations.
9. Ensure robust, coherent mechanisms for transmitting know-how during assignments such as (a) implementation of systems to ensure continuity of partnerships (see below), (b) regular PO-volunteer discussion workshops, (c) report formats that can be used as tools of institutional memory, (d) missions dedicated specifically to capitalisation and/or (e) systematisation of return assignments.
10. With partners, ensure ongoing promotion of an internal culture of exchange, debate and critical fact-based analysis, to be adopted by oneself in the first instance, setting an example of a healthy approach to conflict transformation.
11. Regarding assignments of young professionals (placements or civil service), give preference to working frameworks where volunteers are in regular contact with their peers, i.e. other young people, which will deliver greater potential for harnessing the mobilising effects of assignments.

Regarding tools for action:

12. Develop a simple method of participative contextual analysis to be used in the framework of joint analyses performed by POs and SOs. The report makes a number of suggestions in this respect.
13. Develop a tool for mapping and analysis of the processes within SCOs to facilitate rapid identification with the partner of support functions that could be provided under the DEP programme. Simultaneously implement a benchmark of good support function practices based on the principles of ongoing improvement.

14. Implement a system for systematic identification of the impacts of DEP missions, linking this to contextual factors for fragility and bearing in mind their qualitative, non-linear character (see conclusions of the Beuret mission).
15. Work with POs to implement the "means for ensuring continuity of partnerships" to place the PO-SO relationship in a timeframe that surpasses the assignment itself. Compared to the procedures already in place during DEP missions, prioritise pre-mission development of a "statement of joint objectives" to guide action and, post-mission, time for systematic identification and joint evaluation of lessons learned (in particular, re-envisage the barometer tool used by the Eirene Suisse partnership).
16. Consider implementation of a backstopping structure at Unité level to group together SO members already operating in similar fragile environments. This structure must be aimed at helping the SOs to provide some of the "additional services" needed in fragile situations, in particular (a) in-depth analysis of the context, (b) security-related surveillance, (c) organisation of volunteer-PO discussion workshops, (d) preparation of publications and (e) completion of some of the work involved in know-how management.

Regarding the supervision of DEP assignments (means of preparing, monitoring and evaluating assignments):

17. Make the ability to deal with the unexpected a major criterion for selecting and recruiting candidates.
18. Take account of intercultural factors, not only in pre-departure preparations but also in the monitoring and evaluation of missions. This means involving POs and ensuring that they are aware of their responsibilities. In this framework, ensure that volunteers are aware of the potentially negative impact of missions, of the challenges they may face (trust, manipulation), and prepare them to work and live in a fragile environment that may prove "abrasive". Cooperation with the diaspora may be envisaged as part of pre-mission preparation.
19. Adapt the living conditions of the volunteer programme in line with the context of each assignment in order to guarantee the physical safety and psychological well-being of volunteers.
20. Greater involvement of local partners and coordinators in awareness-raising work in Switzerland to prevent possible risk of damage to PO's image.

Regarding funding:

21. Diversify funding channels between generalist and specialist donors (in relation to areas of action). This implies, when not already the case, developing a specific approach to specialist donors on the ground, decentralising some fund-raising operations and stepping up collaboration with POs in this area.
22. For fund donors, bear in mind the specific financing requirements and particularities of the DEP programme in fragile situations, this being a pre-condition to achieving the added value of this form of development cooperation – which may have a substantial impact in terms of mobilisation.



About us

For 50 years, Unité, the Swiss association for personnel exchange in development cooperation, has been monitoring the quality of the volunteer assignments through standards, evaluations, institutional support, studies and training. It is made up of 20 member organisations. In partnership with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Unité is committed to an efficient, sustainable and equitable cooperation with partners in the South.

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