Conflict Transformation & Peacebuilding

The September 11, 2001 terrorist bombing of the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon, as well as the on-going violent responses to conflicts in the Middle East, Ireland and some parts of Africa, Asia and South America, are reminders of the fragile nature of global peace. Physical and structural violence against marginalized groups are prevalent both in the so-called developed and developing worlds.

Civil protests in recent G7, WTO meetings and the Summit of the Americas reveal that the citizens of the world are yearning for a change from the status quo. Any change or proposition of new ideas is bound to breed conflict. Development practitioners, civil society groups, and agencies promoting sustainable people- and earth-centred development must therefore empower themselves with the knowledge and skills necessary for managing conflicts constructively. They need to strengthen the capacity of their local partners to build cultures of peace and nonviolence. They must also develop an inclusive and participatory strategy to transform conflicts nonviolently and enable their local partners to recognize and accept that socio-economic, cultural, religious and political disagreements are a fact of life.

In 2001, the Coady Institute identified Community-Based Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding as one of its five strategic areas (others include Advocacy and Networking, Community-Based Resource Management, Community-Based Microfinance, and Asset-Based Community Development). Informed by the principles and practices of the Antigonish Movement, this strategic area is committed to enhancing the capacity of Coady participants and partner organizations to help build cultures of peace.

As part of Coady's course in Community-Based Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding, participants recognize that agencies working for social justice must develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for the creation of dynamic socio-economic and political structures that can effectively manage change and transform violent conflicts.

This issue of Strategies provides a brief outline of Coady's approach to peacebuilding, as well as two examples of participatory techniques that participants learn in order to identify indicators of peace and peacelessness and critically analyze the root causes of conflicts within their communities and organizations.

Coady’s Approach to Building Intra-Community and Organizational Peace

The Coady approach emphasizes that building a culture of peace within local communities is a life-long process. Based on the values of the Antigonish Movement, Coady believes that peace is a fundamental human right. Peace is therefore essential to sustainable development. Building a culture of peace requires the commitment of community members to find alternatives to all forms of violence. It involves creating a community and or working environment that promotes:

- The absence of physical and structural violence
- Gender equity and equality
- Social justice: Justice in this context means the fair distribution of public resources and power. It also means giving every individual in society equal opportunities and access to resources and information that are critical to their existence, well being, and the sustainability of their society and non-human environment.
- Respect for human and earth rights
- Democratic governance
- Economic, political, cultural, religious and social freedoms
- Spiritual awareness
- Environmental sustainability
- The absence of discrimination and violence against children, young people, the elderly and the physically and mentally challenged
- The absence of internal and external exploitation of human and non-human resources
- Tolerance of cultural, religious, ethnic/tribal and racial diversity
- The absence of racism and sexism
- The inclusion of the voices of indigenous people and other marginalized groups in their own development.
Participatory Peacebuilding and Conflict Transformation Techniques

The course in Community-Based Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding consists of a variety of participatory and experiential methods, including role-plays, problem-solving techniques, small group discussions, peace songs, proverbs and symbols. These techniques enable participants to critically analyze the sources of conflict and peacelessness including the wider socio-economic, cultural, religious and political causes as well as allowing them to explore constructive and non-violent approaches to building cultures of peace both at local and global levels. Below are two examples of problem-solving techniques participants have found to be very useful.

Technique #1:

Intra-community Peace and Peacelessness Indicators' Framework

With reference to the state of peace in their Southern context, participants designed an analytical framework. This framework enables community members to identify their indicators based on their vision of a peaceful community. It also helps them to focus on their core values and aspirations. Indicators of peace and peacelessness also enable group members to monitor and evaluate their state of peace.

Indicators of Intra-community Peace
- Popular participation in community activities, projects, festivals, etc.
- Gender equality and equity
- Food security and safe drinking water
- Popular participation in major decision making processes
- Power sharing
- Respect for human rights
- Democratic leadership
- Equitable distribution of public resources
- Respect for religious, ethnic and racial diversity
- Access to good and affordable educational and health facilities
- Job opportunities for the unemployed
- Racial and ethnic harmony
- Recognition of importance of spirituality in individual and community life
- Presence of women, young people, indigenous people and physically challenged people in positions of power
- Protection of environment against misuse
- Transparent and accountable community leadership

Indicators of Intra-community Peacelessness
- Abuse against women and children
- Exploitation of child labour
- Dictatorial leadership
- Illiteracy
- Food insecurity
- Intolerance of ethnic and racial differences
- Racism
- Gender bias
- Religious intolerance
- High rate of violent conflicts
- Poor health facilities
- Environmental pollution
- Discrimination against indigenous people and other marginalized groups
- Incidences of sexual abuses
- Bribery and corruption
- Mismanagement of public resources
- Hunger and malnutrition
- Diseases
- Environmental violence
- Lack of popular access to basic human needs (education, health, shelter, etc.)

Technique #2:

But-why Method: A Participatory Conflict Analysis Technique

This technique is used to identify the parties in conflict and the type of conflict they are involved in, analyze the root causes of the conflict and explore non-violent responses to the conflict. It enables participants to deepen their awareness of the complex nature of intra-organizational and community conflicts and the significance of participatory approaches to conflict transformation. This technique can be used to analyze the root causes of any type of conflict or problem. The But-why Method, which is adapted from David Werner - author of “Where There is No Doctor”, has the following stages:

- Firstly, the group using this tool must first agree on the name of the conflict and identify the parties involved.
- In the second stage, the group brainstorms on major causes of the conflict and agrees to analyze at least four of them. Using the But-why Method, the causes of each of these major causes are further analyzed in order to generate another layer of causes.
- At every layer of the causes the group discusses what strategies could be used to address the issues raised. If further analysis is required, the group continues to ask the question “But why?” until no more causes can be identified.
- The final layer of causes represents the root causes of the conflict and at this stage the group agrees on what they can do to address the root causes they have identified.
Intra-family conflict

- No jobs
- Illiteracy
- Poverty
- Male dominance
- Low income
- No transparency

But Why?

- Misunderstanding between husband and wife
- Over allocation and use of family resources

But Why?

- Mistrust
- Dishonesty
- No legislation on family property ownership

But Why?

- Misuse of power by the husband
- No gender policy on gender equity

This analysis enabled the participants to realize that in order to deal with this conflict constructively, issues such as the lack of jobs, male dominance, illiteracy, low income, lack of gender policy, dishonesty and misuse of power should be addressed. Reflecting on the relevance of the knowledge and skills learned from the course, the following comments were made by a few of the participants:

"This is an excellent, useful course which allowed me to re-dedicate myself to the inner, deeper values required to address conflicts within my family, organization, and community."

"I gained a lot from this course. It is very relevant to peacebuilding at all levels - and essential given the present context of peacelessness and conflict in the world."

This issue of *Strategies* has briefly described one of Coady’s educational approaches to enhancing the capacity of its Southern partners to explore alternatives to violent responses to intra-community and organizational conflicts. In conclusion, it is worth noting that the current socio-economic and political instability faced by many countries in the world, especially in the South, is an indication that building cultures of peace is one of the greatest challenges facing development workers in the 21st century. It is a challenge that the Coady Institute is committed to face together with its Southern partners.

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Resources on Peacebuilding & Conflict Transformation

Books


Manual


This training manual helps teachers educate citizens to be appreciative of other cultures, the value of freedom, and the ability to prevent or resolve conflicts by non-violent means.

eResources


This overview draws operational lessons from the Canadian International Development Agency's understanding of the inter-relationships among gender equality, conflict and peacebuilding.


This paper reviews the range of women’s experiences during conflict and illustrates the benefits of a gendered analysis of conflict, peacemaking and peacebuilding processes.


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This groundbreaking book documents and analyzes a diverse array of peacebuilding policies and projects from women’s grassroots, NGOs, the United Nations and other international organizations, concluding with a number of key lessons for effective peacebuilding.


This paper sets out practical recommendations on how to bring women into the heart of peace processes and presents powerful evidence that motivated groups of women are often more committed to the sustainable ending of violence than men.

Women Building Peace http://www.international-alert.org/women/new2.html

Email: gendercampaign@international-alert.org

Launched in 1999 with support from over 200 women’s organizations, the international Women Building Peace campaign promotes full implementation of international commitments and resolutions relating to women, peace and security, and women’s peacebuilding activities.

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