

GLOBAL INSIGHTS

Hybrid Peacemaking: Building National “Infrastructures for Peace”



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POTENTIALLY VIOLENT TENSIONS OR ONGOING VIOLENCE ARE INCREASINGLY insusceptible to one-time external mediation or local conflict resolution as:

1. Conflicts are not limited to the primary protagonists alone, but extend through the different levels of society, from political and civic leaderships down through to communities, and over issues such as land, natural resources, and governance;
2. Contemporary societies face continuous political or socioeconomic transformation where the challenge is not the resolution of a specific conflict, but providing sustained accompaniment to all relevant actors so that the eventual outcomes are based on inclusion and consensus and do not lead to more instability (many countries in the Middle East are undergoing such transition);
3. Potentially violent instability may result from the creeping influence of illicit trafficking, especially in weapons or narcotics.

Instead, what are required are standing internal capacities for managing recurring tensions at national and local levels so that new conflicts are transformed into opportunities for greater reform and inclusion, rather than violence, in an approach referred to as *conflict transformation*. Such transformation in turn requires the use of external norms and skills as well as traditionally available resources within a society to obtain mediated results that encompass several levels of a conflict. This hybrid peacemaking bridges the illiberal and liberal frameworks identified in this issue by Anna K. Jarstad and Roberto Belloni.

In supporting countries to build these capacities, external partners can help bridge the real or perceived gaps between international norms and practices on the one hand, and existing internal mechanisms for conflict management on the other. These hybridized internal mediation capacities therefore enable a more progressive teleology for governance in that constructively negotiated solutions to governance-related contests, generated within a context of national capacity and ownership, are also likely to be more inclusive and participatory across a wider range of actors than otherwise.

National Infrastructures for Peace as Hybrid Peacemaking

A critical emerging tool for hybrid peacemaking is “infrastructures for peace.” Meeting in Naivasha, Kenya, in 2010, representatives from fourteen African countries agreed on a definition of *infrastructures for peace*, or the “dynamic network of interdependent structures, mechanisms, resources, values, and skills which, through dialogue and consultation, contribute to conflict prevention and peace-building in a society.”¹ Such infrastructures can help a country:

1. Manage recurrent conflicts over land, natural resources, apportioning of mineral wealth, and contested elections, especially where development itself has exacerbated these conflicts;
2. Complement external mediation targeted at the primary parties with internal negotiations that bring together actors at different levels of the society and polity, thus broadening the base for peace;
3. Negotiate and implement new governing arrangements in an inclusive and consensual manner, especially after periods of turbulent political or socioeconomic transition.

The World Bank’s *World Development Report* for 2011 focuses on the challenges of addressing protracted fragility and highlights the extended period of time required for meaningful transformation, and the necessity in this context of “inclusive enough coalitions” that can generate the collective political will for reform. The internal bargaining required to sustain these coalitions highlights the necessity for infrastructures for peace, and the report mentions Ghana’s National Peace Council (described below) as one example. The upcoming report of the UN Secretary-General to the General Assembly on Civilian Capacity in the Aftermath of Conflict (2011) also advocates for better use of existing national capacities.²

The UN Development Programme (UNDP), in close collaboration with the Department for Political Affairs (DPA), is currently supporting efforts to establish or consolidate such infrastructures in approximately thirty countries.³ Three characteristics demonstrate the hybrid nature of the intervention.

First, the traditional dichotomy between structural and operational prevention is transcended. For example, the UN’s development presence is seen as an important vehicle for conflict prevention, not just by doing better development, but also by equipping national and local actors with the skills and tools to manage specific conflicts and tensions in the short to medium term. Hence, development is the vehicle not just for structural, but also operational prevention. Conversely, the political arm of the UN now increasingly supports the building of national capacities for conflict prevention (cf. examples below), especially as diplomats recognize that external interventions may at best freeze complex and multilayered conflicts if not accompanied by endogenous processes of change.

Second, the profile of technical expertise deployed by international partners to support efforts to build national and local capacities for conflict prevention is also significantly different from the more conventional categories. For instance, UNDP and DPA jointly deploy peace and development advisors (PDAs)⁴ through UNDP country offices to support national counterparts with their own conflict prevention and management efforts. These advisors combine analytical skills with competencies for mediation and facilitation to help national and local actors acquire and apply processes and tools for conflict management.⁵

Third, the new approach has helped orient conflict prevention more toward the Global South. The emphasis on building national capacities for conflict prevention, based primarily on Southern experiences such as Ghana's National Peace Council,⁶ Kenya's increasingly functional system of "district peace committees,"⁷ Nepal's Ministry for Peace and Reconstruction, and Timor-Leste's Department for Peace-building and Social Cohesion⁸ in the Ministry of Social Solidarity, places the responsibility for conflict prevention on the concerned governments and civil societies themselves. This has led to significantly greater numbers of "entry points"⁹ for preventive action than is the case with the traditional, more interventionist, approaches.

Recent Applications of Infrastructures for Peace

Nine indicative examples of UN assistance for infrastructures for peace are the following:

1. *Guyana*: In 2006, after a period of rising political tension, Guyana conducted its first ever violence-free elections. An independent external evaluation conclusively attributed this result to a UNDP-supported national initiative known as the Social Cohesion Programme. A national dialogue, a network of local mediators to help ease tensions among communities, and agreements among political parties were some of the instruments used.¹⁰

2. *Ghana*: Ghana is West Africa's most stable democracy. Yet in December 2008, chieftaincy-related conflicts in parts of the country and the discovery of oil led to new tensions as the country approached national elections. When elections were conducted, 50,000 votes separated the winner and the loser. With tensions rising the National Peace Council, an autonomous national statutory body established with UNDP assistance, helped mediate a peaceful political transition. According to Emmanuel Bombande, a Ghanaian and the founder of the West Africa Network for Peace, "When it mattered most in an extremely difficult moment during Ghana's elections in 2008, the National Peace Council was there to save Ghana."¹¹

3. *Bolivia*: In 2008, Bolivia almost descended into social violence over a dispute over constitutional reform that followed a period of rising political ten-

sion. Working through instruments such as independent public surveys, credible information on the technical issues faced by the parties, and facilitation and observation through its country team when requested, the UN discretely assisted internal negotiations in reaching consensus around a new constitution.¹²

4. *Ecuador-Colombia*: Over a five-year period from 2004 to 2009, a UN interagency initiative assisted national efforts to stabilize Ecuador's northern border region with Colombia, which was confronted with spillovers from the activities of armed groups in Colombia so that communities along the border overwhelmed with refugees, gang violence, and illicit trafficking. By 2009 levels of violent crime had been reduced, services had improved, and dialogue had been established to resolve local conflicts. Lasting bilateral collaboration was also established between the two governments on this issue.

5. *Kenya*: In 2010 Kenya, which is Africa's second largest non-oil economy, held a constitutional referendum without single incident of violence. This followed the failed 2007 elections when 1,500 people were killed and an additional 300,000 displaced. In advance of the referendum, UNDP provided quiet support for successful national efforts to reach consensus on the new draft constitution and helped government and civil society implement an early warning and response system—the Uwiano Platform¹³—that prevented approximately 250 incidents of potential violence. Local peace committees were strengthened in all of the country's districts and played a critical peacemaking role during the referendum.

6. *Timor-Leste*: Timor-Leste's fragile peace process almost collapsed between 2007 and 2009 as the return of refugees and internally displaced persons caused a significant increase in conflicts over land. With UN assistance, a network of community mediators was trained and deployed. Their efforts had enabled the return and resettlement of 13,000 families by 2010. In recognition of these efforts, the government is now working with UNDP to establish a new Department for Peace-building.

7. *Kyrgyzstan*: In Kyrgyzstan, potentially violent tensions were deescalated before and during the constitutional referendum and parliamentary elections in 2010, allowing the voting to be conducted without violence. UNDP assisted the confidence-building efforts of Oblast Advisory Committees (OACs) at the provincial level and Local Authority Advisory Committees (LAACs) at the district level. For example, the OAC of Issyk-Gul facilitated dialogue between law enforcement agencies and youth and conducted awareness raising campaigns on the risks of religious extremism.

8. *Sierra Leone*: Sierra Leone's 2007 elections marked the first transition of power since the end of the civil war and political tensions and the potential for violence ran significantly high. UNDP equipped the Political Parties Registration Commission (PPRC) to play the role of an independent convener and mediator.¹⁴ It also supported the deployment of local-level mediators, alongside a sustained advocacy campaign for peace that was often led and conducted by disempowered youth. The elections and the subsequent transfer of

power to the opposition were peaceful and calls to violence by segments of the political leadership were not answered by the youth.

9. *Lesotho*: Lesotho's modern experience of democracy and constitutional monarchy has been characterized by prolonged deadlock, leading to violence which precipitated a Southern African Development Community (SADC) military intervention in 1998 and again raised potentially violent tensions in mid-2009. In the latter instance, a national church-led platform was formed to mediate among the major political actors and received discrete UN support. By the first quarter of 2011, the platform had successfully mediated a negotiated end to the deadlock.¹⁵

Best Practices and Suggestions for Further Action

Some preliminary best practices and suggestions have emerged, based partly on recent evaluations of efforts in Guyana, Ecuador, Kenya, and Ghana.

Complimentarity Between National and International Initiatives

Where efforts to build and apply capacities were undertaken together with regional or international diplomacy, they demonstrate that the latter requires the former to achieve its full order of success. In Kenya, the Concerned Citizens for Peace initiative by a group of senior Kenyan leaders opened the domestic space for Kofi Annan's mediation. Subsequently, once the Kenyan leadership had declined further international mediation, internal efforts helped sustain negotiations over the draft constitution and other vital reforms. However, as compared to resources currently invested in strengthening international or regional diplomacy, relatively few efforts have been made to strengthen national mediation capacities.

The Importance of Entry Points

Parties to potentially violent tensions, either directly or inadvertently, are unlikely to take remedial actions if confronted by external actors. Most initiatives to develop national capacities for conflict prevention therefore start with an elicitive approach, wherein pertinent actors are encouraged to analyze impediments to development (rather than the fact or potential for conflict) in a manner that does not immediately threaten anyone's positions or interests. Inevitably, as actors become more comfortable—as part of a structured, facilitated, process—with engaging issues such as polarization or lack of ability to forge consensus, entry points emerge for preventive action, even as the attitudes of the participating actors begin to be transformed.

Elections Are Not About "Elections"

In recent years, elections have become a key focus for governments, civil society, and international partners, and significant effort is expended in ensuring

their technical soundness. However, elections concentrate many of the political tensions within a society. Hence, ensuring stable political transitions requires the building of infrastructures for peace well before, during, and after elections. Peaceful elections in Guyana in 2006 and Ghana in 2004 and 2008, and the successful constitutional referendum in Kenya in 2010, all took place in the context of multiyear, UN backed, initiatives to develop and apply national capacities for conflict prevention. Three elements were common to all of these cases:

1. The presence of national platforms that enabled a minimum political consensus to be reached prior to elections or that mediated tensions during the elections themselves;
2. The presence of significant conflict management and mediation capacities at the local levels, often in the form of local peace committees or similar mechanisms;
3. The work of civil society, especially religious and traditional leaders, in carrying out systematic advocacy for peace and engaging, especially, youth in these efforts.

The Challenge of Political Will

Hybrid peacemaking can be stymied by the potential lack of political will among key stakeholders who may not wish to engage in the search for negotiated solutions and hence acquire tools toward this end.

In ongoing initiatives, this challenge has been overcome through three linked approaches: (1) The first was to “de-stigmatize” the issue (i.e., instead of confronting stakeholders with the need to share power or to resolve conflict, the issue was articulated—by national actors themselves—as being one of building consensus around priorities, or advancing social cohesion, within a development framework); (2) the need for acquiring negotiation skills was similarly articulated not from a particular political perspective, but instead from the point of their day-to-day applications, from the office to the business, and from the parliament to the home; (3) once participants had agreed to and acquired these skills, they often drew their own conclusions with regard to their wider application; and (4) for those actors susceptible to win-lose perspectives on the exercise of power, insider mediators with access to these actors gently made the case for win-win approaches and then accompanied their application.

Conclusion

Developing infrastructures for peace constitutes a distinctive method of hybrid peacemaking. Recent examples show that it is indeed possible to equip national and local actors to resolve conflicts, prevent violence, and build consensus over contentious issues in an inclusive and credible manner. And this

approach is cost effective. Results in Guyana, Bolivia, Ghana, Kenya, and Timor-Leste were achieved, for instance, for approximately \$15 million. However, challenges remain: first, because conflict management is not always perceived as a collaborative endeavor; and, second, because investing in a hybrid approach implies acknowledging the complexity of a conflict management process. Further research may well elicit more effective approaches to hybrid peacemaking through national infrastructures for peace and, hence, help make a better case for resources. 🌐

Notes

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The views expressed in this article are strictly those of the authors and do not reflect the view of the United Nations.

1. Report of the Experience Sharing Seminar on Building Infrastructures for Peace, Naivasha, Kenya, 2–4 February 2010, p. 3.

2. UN Doc. S/2011/527 (19 August 2011).{Au: Please provide title.}

3. Collaboration between UNDP and DPA in this regard had commenced with the launch of the Joint UNDP-DPA Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention in 2004. Both organizations have also taken joint steps to strengthen the Interagency Framework Team on Coordination for Preventive Action (Framework Team), which supports joint action by UN country teams in situations of early conflict prevention.

4. The term *peace and development advisor* is a generic term. In country, these specialists are variously referred to as “peace and governance advisors,” “collaborative capacity advisors,” “social cohesion advisors,” and so on.

5. PDAs and similar specialists are deployed in at least twenty-five countries. The UN Framework Team hosts a community of practice for them, thus allowing for experiences to be shared. Technical and operational support for the deployment of these advisors is provided primarily by UNDP's Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery.

6. The National Peace Council is detailed at www.mint.gov.gh/dmdocuments/a_peace_architecture_for_ghana_.pdf. The council was established by a cabinet decision in 2007 and by the parliament as an autonomous national statutory commission in May 2011.

7. See AllAfrica.com, “Communities Forge Their Own Peace in the Rift Valley,” 26 October 2010, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201010280929.html>.

8. See “The Ministry of Social Solidarity Launches the Department of Peace-Building and Social Cohesion to Celebrate World Human Rights Day,” www.tl.undp.org/undp/The%20Ministry%20of%20Social%20Solidarity%20launches%20the%20Department%20of%20Peace-Building%20and%20Social%20Cohesion%20to%20celebrate%20World%20Human%20Rights%20Day.html.

9. An “entry point” is defined as a particular moment deemed appropriate for third party intervention to transform constructively the interplay between the conflicting parties. See Jos De la Haye, *Missed Opportunities in Conflict Management: The Case of Bosnia-Herzegovina* (Belgium: K. U. Leuven: 2001), p. 74.

10. For an independent evaluation of the program, see “Can Fostering a Culture of Dialogue Change the Course of a Nation?” (UNDP, 2006), www.undp.org.gy/pdf/final_SCP_evaluation.pdf.

11. Statement during the opening session of the Experience Sharing Seminar on Building Infrastructures for Peace, Naivasha, Kenya, 2–4 February 2010.

12. See an account of the role of the UNDP program, Proyecto Analisis Politico y Escenarios Prospectivos (PAPEP) in this regard on “PAPEP Project Was Presented at NORAD/UNDP Workshops on Governance and Political Economy Analysis,” October 2010, www.gobernabilidaddemocratica-pnud.org/detalle_noticia.php?id_not=124. See, in particular, the comments from Jose Luis Exeni, the former head of Bolivia’s National Electoral Court.

13. For an account of the work of the Uwiano Platform, see “Kenya: SOS by SMS,” 3 August 2010, www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportID=90050.

14. According to an assessment of the elections conducted by UK’s Department for International Development (DFID), “One of the innovations that the UNDP has introduced into the electoral process is [the] PPRC. . . . PPRC has played a useful role in promoting a Code of Conduct for Political Parties among activists and mediating the conflicts that have arisen—both during the elections and after them,” www.dfid.gov.uk/Documents/publications1/elections/elections-sl-2007-2008.pdf.

15. For more on the church-led mediation and wider UN efforts to enhance “collaborative capacity” in Lesotho, see www.undp.org.ls/democratic/Collaborative_Capacities.php.