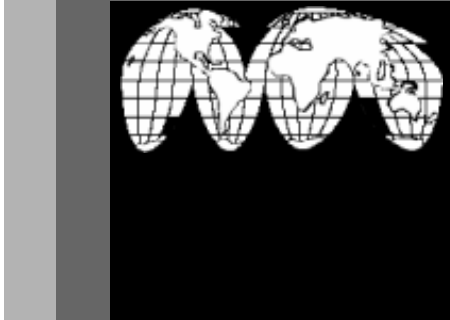# Promoting Social Reconciliation In Postconflict Societies

Selected Lessons From USAID's Experience

by

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Preface

THE CENTER for Development Information and Evaluation (CDIE) has undertaken a program of evaluation studies to analyze the role of international assistance in the political rehabilitation of postconflict societies. The center represented USAID in the multidonor evaluation of emergency assistance to Rwanda and subsequently authored *Rebuilding Postwar Rwanda*. This was followed by a volume, *Rebuilding Societies After Civil War*, that examined the different dimensions of postconflict rehabilitation and drew policy lessons for the international community.

The center evaluated international experience of assisting postconflict elections in six countries, presenting its findings in a monograph, *From Bullets to Ballots*. The volume *Postconflict Elections, Democratization & International Assistance* expanded both the framework of analysis and the number of case studies, adding greater depth and detail to our understanding of these elections.

CDIE also undertook three case studies to examine strategies to promote social reconciliation in the aftermath of civil wars. One case study examined the role of peace committees in South Africa. The second analyzed the role of scientific cooperation in strengthening the peace process in the Middle East. The third case study examined the role of media and economic reactivation programs supported by the international community in promoting interethnic harmony in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This report seeks to synthesize the findings and conclusions of those case studies.

Several colleagues and consultants have helped me prepare this report, and I gratefully acknowledge them. Robin Silver helped me in additional research and Ross Bankson in editing the report. Susan Merrill and Joseph Lieberson, respectively the director and deputy director of CDIE's Program and Operations Assessment Division, provided not only intellectual leadership but also the resources for the ongoing studies. I am indebted to all of them. But above all, I am grateful to the authors of the three case studies on which this report is based.

—KRISHNA KUMAR

Introduction

A S A PART OF ITS ONGOING EVALUATION of the role of international assistance in promoting the political rehabilitation of postconflict societies, USAID's Center for Development Information and Evaluation (CDIE) undertook three case studies of social reconciliation activities supported by the Agency and other donors.[*]

The first study investigated the nature, functions, and achievements of peace committees in South Africa. These committees were established in pursuance of the National Peace Accords, signed in September 1991, to prevent violence and promote peace.

The second study looked at interstate conflict. It assessed the extent to which scientific collaboration between Israel and its Arab neighbors succeeded in creating and sustaining the attitudes, perceptions, and institutional relationships conducive to peace.

The third study examined the role of peace media in promoting interethnic reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. More important, it analyzed the effects of economic development initiatives on fostering ethnic tolerance.

This paper is based largely on these three case studies. It seeks to present and elaborate their findings within a conceptual framework to draw out policy and strategy lessons. Section 1 defines the construct of social reconciliation as used in these pages and identifies strategies the international community has adopted to promote the process in postconflict societ-

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[*]The expression *postconflict societies* refers to countries in the aftermath of civil war. Such wars end as the result of negotiated peace accords or after the victory of one party. Such societies inherit a shattered political system, a fragmented society, and a devastated economy. A universal feature of postconflict societies is the pervasive antagonism, mistrust, and hostility between the former adversaries, even though peace has been brokered.

The term *international community* refers to all bilateral and multilateral agencies, intergovernmental organizations, international nongovernmental organizations, philanthropic organizations, relief agencies, and private firms involved in humanitarian assistance, conflict resolution, and development.

ies. Section 2 presents an overview of the case studies, both the main findings and conclusions. Finally, Section 3 suggests lessons for USAID and other international donor organizations.

A word about the data and information. CDIE examined four different sets of interventions to generate preliminary evidence about social reconciliation strategies. All the data gathered were qualitative in nature, derived from in-depth interviews, document review, and field observation. The researchers interviewed large numbers of informants and had access to a wealth of material and ideas. CDIE did additional literature reviews to complement the data generated by the case studies.

1 Social Reconciliation

Conceptualizing Social Reconciliation

THE CONSTRUCT of social reconciliation undoubtedly remains controversial. The word *reconciliation* derives from the Latin expression *conciliatus,* which means "coming together." Strictly speaking, reconciliation implies a process, that of restoring the shattered relationship between two actors. The adjective *social* simply indicates that the emphasis is on group, and not individual, reconciliation.

This conceptualization has limited relevance for postconflict situations. First, it is both unrealistic and impolitic to talk about restoring mutual trust in the aftermath of severe, brutal conflict, when memories of the violence per-

petuated by the warring groups are still fresh and the social vestiges of destruction still quite visible. Under these conditions, the reconciliation process can at best promote intergroup tolerance, an attitude of live-and-let-live. The process cannot go beyond this. Second, intergroup harmony did not always exist before the conflict; to presume so would be incorrect.

In these pages, the term *social reconciliation* has a singular definition, unlike its usual connotation. As conceptualized here, it is a process that begins with the adversaries' acceptance of each other's right to coexist in war-torn societies. Social reconciliation does not presuppose tolerance; it seeks to promote it. In some circumstances, it may culminate in the beginnings of mutual trust.

> **Soon after the genocide, social workers with Catholic Relief Services initiated seminars in Rwanda to talk about "reconciliation." Their well-meaning effort fell flat. Rwandans were not ready to reconcile, and the mere mention of the word "reconciliation" so soon after a genocide struck many Rwandans as insensitive at best, deeply offensive at worst.**
>
> **— Jeff Drumtra**

Social reconciliation interventions are therefore specifically designed to foster intergroup understanding, strengthen nonviolent conflict resolution mechanisms, and heal the wounds of war. They differ from conventional projects and programs in that their primary objective is to promote social reconciliation, and not to provide services or advance economic, social, or political development. Table 1 lists examples of various types of interventions that can promote social reconciliation in postconflict societies.

A social reconciliation intervention is supposed to achieve one or more of the following objectives:

 To prevent or resolve the occurrence of violent conflict by facilitating communication and by developing peace structures

 To reduce deep-seated anger, prejudices, and misunderstandings among the conflicting groups through reciprocal dialog, cooperative action, and acknowledgment of the past

 To establish or reestablish positive relationships among conflicting parties through communication and cooperative activities.

Table 1. Examples of Activities Affecting Reconciliation in Postwar Societies

Political and Governance Related

1. Democratic institution building (e.g., political parties)
2. Free and fair elections
3. Power-sharing arrangements
4. Devolution of political authority
5. Institutional capacity building for governance
6. Judicial and legal reforms
7. Law-enforcement system based on the rule of law
8. Observance of human rights

Military Related

1. Civilian control over the military
2. Professionalization of the military
3. Demobilization
4. Reinsertion and reintegration of demobilized soldiers

Social Rehabilitation Related

1. Repatriation and resettlement of refugees and internally displaced persons
2. Expansion of literacy and education
3. Equitable access to health services
4. Promotion of civil society

Economic Growth

1. Rebuilding war-shattered economy
2. Employment and income generation
3. Increased economic integration of excluded ethnic, social, or political groups in the economy
4. Land reforms
5. Economic decentralization
6. Intercommunal trade

Social Reconciliation Strategies and Activities

To achieve these objectives, conflict theorists and practitioners have proposed several basic strategies around which a wide array of social reconciliation interventions can be devised and implemented (see table 2). Some of them are briefly described below.

Uncovering The Past

A consensus exists among conflict theorists that uncovering the past is an essential step in the social reconciliation process. Without a comprehensive examination of the violations experienced on all sides, mutual acceptance remains illusive at best. It is important to bring to light those traumas—acts of violence, human rights abuses, disappearances, and loss of property—sustained during the conflict and often hidden from the general populace. While uncovering the past may heighten intergroup tension in the short run, conflict theorists contend that it is necessary to address the fragmented relationships and to initiate psychological healing. Furthermore, disclosing the past helps establish a social climate that condones neither repression nor violence.

Truth commissions are undoubtedly the most visible example of this strategy. Such commissions uncover the past and fix responsibility. Argentina was one of the first countries to experiment with the idea, followed by El Salvador and Haiti. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa was probably the most comprehensive attempt to examine and expose the gross human right violations perpetuated during the apartheid regime. Its avowed purpose was restitution, not revenge.

Table 2. Social Reconciliation Strategies

1. *Uncovering the past*
   a. Truth commissions
   b. Indigenous mechanisms of acknowledging the past

2. *Promoting dialog*
   a. Problem-solving workshops
   b. High-profile conferences
   c. Conflict management training
   d. Sustained dialog

3. *Promoting understanding through media*
   a. Documentaries and films promoting mutual understanding
   b. Peace radio and television
   c. Professionalization of media, both print and electronic
   d. Institutional infrastructure for independent media

4. *Developing grass-roots structures for peace*
   a. Peace committees and commissions
   b. Peace research and training organizations

5. *Collaborative activities*
   a. Scientific and technical collaboration
   b. Collaborative development interventions
   c. Collaboration in sports, music, and arts

Traditional societies often have indigenous mechanisms for acknowledging past misdeeds. Examples include public confession of guilt; reconstructing the past through storytelling; public feasts signifying that the past is, if not completely forgotten, then nonetheless forgiven; and public ceremonies attended by conflicting parties.

Promoting Dialog

Another strategy promotes dialog among the conflicting parties. The implicit premise is that dialog entails a willingness to listen to opposing viewpoints and helps in acknowledging mutual needs, rights, and obligations. The primary object of dialog is the process itself, rather than the specific outcomes.

The international community has supported four types of activities to promote dialog in postconflict societies. The first, problem-solving workshops, usually convened by third parties, bring representatives of conflicting groups together to seek solutions to shared difficulties. Participants generally include academics, professionals, social leaders, and religious leaders. The second popular activity is the high-profile conference usually organized by religious, academic, philanthropic, or intergovernmental organizations. Regional representatives, high-level government officials, faction leaders, and religious figures, as well as potential donors, participate in them.

The third activity, conflict management training, has gained support in recent years. The goal of such training is teaching the methods and skills necessary to limit or avoid intragroup conflicts. Conducted by nongovernmental organizations, professional institutions, and private foundations, it entails information exchange, skills learning and rehearsal, collective reflection, and possibly conflict analysis. The last category includes "sustained dialogs." Unlike conferences and workshops, these efforts attempt to redefine the relationship between the conflicting parties and work through the underlying issues of contention. Generally, participation begins with interested individuals and expands to include civil servants or government officials.

Promoting Understanding Through Media

The third strategy establishes and strengthens responsible, professional media—both print and electronic. The premise is that such a strategy can promote social reconciliation in several ways. It helps dissipate the rumors and propaganda disseminated by extremists, which feed social and political tensions. It also creates a space for articulating diverse viewpoints, approaches, and opinions. Above all, it contributes to both transparency and accountability in public affairs, exerting pressure on political and social leaders to behave in a responsible way.

The international community has supported a wide range of media interventions during conflict and postconflict situations. These range from preparing documentaries for mass consumption, broadcasting peace education programs, establishing radio stations and newspapers committed to peace and democracy, and assisting independent media. Peace radios were established in Burundi, Rwanda, and Somalia

during the conflict. In Rwanda, for example, Swiss-supported Radio Agatashya, established in August 1994, was instrumental in correcting the Hutu extremists' propaganda. In early 1994, World Vision supported a radio program produced by local church groups in Burundi. The program covered issues such as alternatives to the ongoing ethnic violence, interethnic harmony, and conflict resolution. An international nongovernmental organization (NGO) called Search for Common Ground has promoted a studio that produces radio programs to encourage reconciliation. Low cost is one attraction of radio in these countries. With little investment, peace messages can be disseminated to millions of people, even those in remote areas.

As part of its activities promoting democracy, USAID has taken the lead in strengthening the independent media in many postconflict societies. Such programs are generally implemented in partnership with local broadcasters, with the funding and at the behest of NGOs and independent institutions.

Developing Grass-Roots Structures for Peace

The fourth strategy creates grass-roots structures to maintain peace. Variously known as peace committees, peace commissions, or citizens groups, these grass-roots organizations mobilize local leaders and community members to prevent eruptions of violence and to foster tolerance. This may involve a number of tasks, such as countering rumor and exaggeration, advocating nonviolent solutions to conflicts, offering peace education through community programs, and mediating between contentious groups or between groups and the government.

In 1947, peace committees in the major cities of India attempted to control the outbreak of interethnic conflict then engulfing the country. Their membership consisted of prominent citizens, such as the leaders of ethnic groups, political parties, academic institutions, and religious and social organizations. The committees played a major role in subduing the conflict and restoring peace. In both Nicaragua and South Africa, peace committees have been credited with reducing the level of conflict and promoting mutual understanding. Ethnic reconciliation commissions have also been established in Poland, Bulgaria, and the Czech Republic. Peace committees function as well in the former Yugoslavia. Receiving only minimal support from the international community, these bodies continue to rely on local funding.

In many countries, grass-roots researching and training institutions have been established to promote communal harmony and understanding.

Advancing Collaborative Activities

The last strategy promotes collaborative activities for members of conflicting groups on the assumption that such activities help foster positive attitudes among the participants. Once they start working together, members of antagonistic groups gradually move beyond bitterness, anger, and resentment. Through collaboration, they eventually come to see each other as human beings, not as old enemies.

Unlike other interventions, collaborative activities often have an important secondary objective—promoting development. The international community has funded such collaborative projects in trade, extension, agriculture, infrastructure, and small-scale industry. Most of these programs were modest, implemented by private voluntary organizations. In addition to economic development projects, collaborative activities have provided local communities with much-needed social services such as child care, recreation, and primary education. Since these efforts bring positive benefits to the participants, they help develop constituencies in support of collaborative development activities, contributing to social reconciliation.
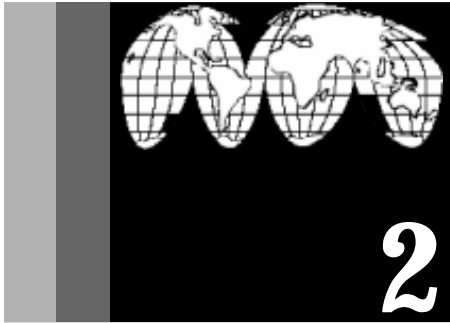
2 USAID's Case Studies

T HE FIRST THREE CASE STUDIES presented here are examples of the last three strategies for social reconciliation. They highlight both their strengths and weaknesses and indicate the conditions most propitious for success. Strictly speaking, the fourth and last case study is not an example of a social reconciliation strategy as defined above. It does illustrate, though, how even in an ethnically divided society, interventions in economic development can also contribute to social reconciliation.

Peace Committees In South Africa*

In South Africa the National Peace Accords established new structures and new mechanisms to offset those of the apartheid regime. These mechanisms also prepared the groundwork for an eventual transformation of the political order. The first was the establishment of a truth commission to document past human rights abuses committed by the government as well as

opposition political parties. To confront the pervasive turbulence in South Africa, the peace accords mandated the creation of a second mechanism: local and regional peace committees. The network of local and regional committees, supervised by a National Peace Committee and its secretariat, was intended to guarantee communities recourse to the peaceful management of conflict and settlement of disputes.

Composed of senior political leaders, the National Peace Secretariat created and monitored the peace committees. In doing so, it accorded high priority to the areas most affected by violence—the Witsvaal and the KwaZulu–Natal regions. The secretariat eventually established 11 regional peace committees, which in turn formed, staffed, and supervised 260 local peace committees. The regional committees were composed of the representatives from different political parties, security agencies, concerned government departments, and important civic organizations.

Although the government provided the bulk of the resources, the peace committees also

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*Nicole Ball wrote the case study with Chris Spies.

received substantial grants from the international community as well as the South African private sector. The major international donors were the British Overseas Development Agency and Danish International Development Assistance. USAID supported nongovernmental and community-based organizations engaged in mediation, conflict resolution, and civic education. These provided members, expertise, and a ready-made constituency for the peace committees.

The regional and local peace committees performed several interrelated functions with varying degrees of success. They opened channels of communication among antagonistic groups. By providing a forum for discussion, they generated a dialog where none existed or seemed possible. In the highly polarized political climate of South Africa, this was a formidable task; individuals entering into dialog with opposing groups often found themselves ostracized, even punished, by their own communities.

Still more important, the peace committees often negotiated disputes and monitored implementation of the agreements. They created a physical and psychological space where people could meet and resolve their differences. They acted as an unbiased third party, facilitating negotiations and, when necessary, even mediating between the antagonists. In fact, peace committees mediated in a wide range of disputes: between township associations and the security forces, between management and workers, and between organizations belonging to different ethnic groups.

Peace committees often tried and generally succeeded in negotiating multiparty agreements (between the government, event organizers, and adversaries) about the rules and conditions for holding public meetings, marches, and rallies. For example, peace committees worked with march organizers to avoid sensitive routes and to avoid scheduling conflicts that involved opposing groups. They also worked with the security forces to ensure an adequate but nonthreatening presence. As a result, peace committees contributed to the reduction in violence, saving human lives.

Although it was not their mandate, the peace committees performed yet another important function: spotlighting the accountability of public officials. For example, during the apart-

> **In Thokoza township, south of Johannesburg, the ANC [African National Conference] planned a march. Its original route would have taken the demonstrators past IFP [Inkatha Freedom Party] hostels. The Thokoza local peace committee worked with the ANC to modify the route. When the march was held, however, the police failed to block off the relevant street entirely, and the ANC members were able to divert from the agreed-upon route and march past the hostels. In the resulting violence, 19 people were killed.**
>
> **—Nicole Ball with Chris Spies**

heid regime, there was no code of conduct for the police; the force did not have to answer for its actions. The peace committees regularly monitored police activities in many communities to ensure that the police adhered to the code of conduct established by the National Peace Accords. They also tried to hold political parties responsible for their actions to see that they followed their code of conduct. This continual involvement in conflict resolution activities prompted the peace committees to keep a watchful eye on the behavior of other public officials. All this was unprecedented in the history of South Africa.

Several factors affected the performance of the South African peace committees as well. The existence of a national mandate and the political commitment of key political leaders, the business community, and the Church were critical. They gave the committees legitimacy, resources, and visibility. The cooperation of the security forces and other armed groups was also vital. When cooperation was not forthcoming, peace committees faced insurmountable problems. For example, the presence of "third force" death squads jeopardized the ability of peace committees to carry out their tasks, particularly in the Witsvaal and KwaZulu–Natal regions. Local ownership was another important variable; the greater the sense of ownership within the community, the more effective and legitimate the committee. Local ownership allowed the peace committees to claim community resources, such as volunteer labor or funds for employee salaries.

The perceived evenhandedness of the peace committees affected their capacity to broker agreements among adversaries. In the KwaZulu–Natal region, a section of local leaders questioned the committee's evenhandedness, adversely affecting its performance. In addition to these factors, differences in the nature of leadership, the commitment and quality of the staff, organizational flexibility, and access to resources explained variations in peace committee performance.

Finally, the supportive elements of the political environment—local, national, and international—served to enable the development and function of peace committees. International support for the peace process and reconciliation, as steps toward system change, reinforced the commitment from both elite and local leaders. These persisted, even as other factors—the political opposition, the apartheid regime, the struggle mentality—limited the cumulative effects of social reconciliation interventions.

The South African experience demonstrates that the peace committees at local, regional, and national levels can contribute, albeit within certain delimitations, to conflict management in deeply divided societies. Given the right conditions and prerequisites, they can facilitate intragroup communication, work with opposing parties to reduce violence, and promote some tolerance.

In many respects, the experience of peace committees in South Africa is not different from that of peace commissions in Nicaragua. Established in pursuance of the 1987 Esquipulas II Peace Accords and the National Reconciliation Commission, peace commissions have performed communication and mediation functions to promote peace and reconciliation. In fact, these commissions gave a more formal charac-

ter to the efforts of religious leaders to open lines of communication between the Sandinista government and the different factions of the contra army. Often the regional and local peace commissions built on existing networks of personal contacts to arrange for continual dialog and the exchange of information between the government and the contras.

During the transition, the peace commissions facilitated negotiations over the release of prisoners, demobilization and reinsertion, refugee repatriation, and amnesty. They mediated conflicts between the government and the contras and compas, working out new disarmament agreements, monitoring elections and investigating human rights abuses.

The Nicaraguan peace commissions still act as channels of communications and as mediating bodies, with an additional emphasis on conflict resolution and prevention. Over time, processing human rights accusations has become a key function. Consequently, the peace commissions have become the object of institutional strengthening efforts aimed at building capacity and ensuring some uniformity of practice and procedure.

At least two factors that affected the performance and impact of peace committees in South Africa have also been relevant in Nicaragua. First, as was the case in South Africa, the mandate emanating from the National Reconciliation Commission and the endorsement and efforts of both the Catholic and Evangelist Churches and their institutions legitimized the roles of the peace commissions. This support was critical, since the government, whether Sandinista or Opposition National Union, often relied on the peace commissions to monitor and reach out to armed groups. Church support often ensured that the commissions were perceived as neutral players, and not government agents.

Second, local ownership of peace commissions was also an important factor, as in South Africa. When regional commissions did not have community-based counterparts, they were less successful in fulfilling their mediating functions and were less likely to survive the numerous transitions that have characterized Nicaraguan politics.

Scientific Collaboration In the Middle East[*]

The Middle East Regional Cooperation Program (MERC) is a good example of social reconciliation interventions that seek the benefits of collaborative activity. It has been designed to advance peace and reconciliation among former adversaries and still-hostile neighbors by promoting scientific cooperation. Under its auspices, Israeli and Egyptian and other Arab scientists, and their respective institutions, have worked on a variety of research and training projects that meet common developmental needs. After the 1979 Camp David Peace Accords, Congress funded the program at $5 million annually and then $7 million a year after 1990. USAID is responsible for grant administration.

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[*]Krishna Kumar wrote the case study on the MERC program with Irving Rosenthal.

The MERC program provides grants for cooperative projects between Israel and its Arab neighbors. U.S. intermediaries often administer the projects. These are not limited to scientific research; most include technical assistance, training, extension, and institution building. To date, MERC has underwritten collaborative scientific and technical endeavors in health, agriculture, mariculture, water and the environment, and education for peace. Initially, Israel and Egypt were the principal benefactors; however, the Norwegian-sponsored 1993 talks known as Oslo I brought the Palestine Authority and other Middle Eastern countries into the fold.

> **As one who participated in three wars with Arabs, I must confess that I see them differently than I did in the past. My contacts with Egyptian scientists have changed my whole thinking. They are nice, friendly people who want peace as much as we do. I hope that our leaders realize that.**
>
> **—Israeli agricultural specialist**

goodwill and understanding between participating Egyptian and Israeli scientists. Initial encounters evolved into close professional, and then personal, relationships. As a result, former antagonists began to see their counterparts less as enemies and more as friends. New relationships gradually dissipated old stereotypes and replaced them with more positive images and perceptions. While MERC participants discovered their common humanity and shared desires for peace, they did not become public advocates for peace or reconciliation in the region. Given the fragile nature of peace during this period, this may not have been possible.

As a development program, MERC with its various projects has supported advances in applied technology, improved scientific infrastructure, and fostered technology transfers—accomplishments that would not have been possible in the absence of this mechanism. As an instrument of social reconciliation, MERC has promoted tolerance and provided an institutional basis for further cooperation. However, the very nature of scientific research and the postconflict setting have limited its ability to effect wide-reaching change.

The program has promoted social reconciliation in three ways. First, various aspects of scientific collaboration have generated mutual

Second, MERC projects also contributed to the establishment, and often the consolidation, of relationships between Egyptian and Israeli institutions. Before MERC, no scientific cooperation existed between Egypt and Israel. Even in the aftermath of the Camp David accords, participating institutions did not sign bilateral agreements with each other or trilateral agreements with the United States. Rather, the political climate necessitated that each sign separate agreements with a mediating institution, often of U.S. origin. The lack of formal agreements did not affect the science; it merely reflected the political situation of the time. Later, Egyptian and Israeli institutions entered into formal trilateral agreements (with the United

States) and multilateral agreements (with or without the United States). This formalization of relationships strengthened and anchored the new cooperative relationships and arrangements.

MERC projects also created opportunities for the participating organizations to institutionalize their cooperative research. These institutions have now developed procedures, structures, and networks to initiate and sustain new collaborative projects. As they organize future projects and seek funds independently, they have less and less need for U.S. intermediaries.

Finally, MERC projects have generated tangible benefits for both the nations involved and the constituencies that have a stake in the sector. Cooperation in agricultural development, for example, has produced a strong constituency of scientists, progressive farmers, businessmen, and bureaucrats who enjoy the fruits of technology transfers, training, and extension in this area. Their eagerness to maintain these projects translates into strong support for greater social reconciliation.

Nonetheless, the overall impact of the MERC program on social reconciliation has been limited.

First, cooperation has been limited in most MERC projects. Many of the studies undertaken have been "parallel" investigations, rather than collaborative enterprises. That is, scientists from Egypt, Israel, and other countries work independently on similar, though not identical, research problems in their own countries. A consequence has been that the opportunities for individual and institutional cooperation have been limited. In many MERC projects, cooperative activities have often been confined to participation in annual or biennial meetings and workshops, some technical advice, and occasional site visits.

Second, an elitist bias has generally prevented lower level scientists and administrators from attending regional enclaves. In most cases, only a national coordinator, principal investigators, and perhaps a sprinkling of other scientists have met with their counterparts. These two factors, inherent to most MERC projects, have actually limited the potential for reconciliation.

> **There was a desire on the part of each and every participant to continue the collaborative relationship, but, in fact, many of the scientists had already taken steps to ensure that the collaborative efforts would continue in the future. Joint proposal planning sessions had occurred prior to the arrival of the team in the region. . . . There is great enthusiasm to develop this activity into an even more regional concept by endorsing the inclusion of other country participants in the follow-on activities.**
>
> **—Final Evaluation Report, 1995 Trinational Animal Health Research**

As with other postconflict strategies for reconciliation, environmental factors have influenced project performance and the subsequent payoff for reconciliation. Here the interstate nature of the conflict has been a critical factor, offering opportunities for additional roadblocks. The political climate has often upset the schedule of research, data-generation, and collection and information exchange. For example, when government officials or political leaders opposed to a project periodically have created barriers that interfered with the timetable for overseas trips, site visits, or data exchange, both project implementation and social reconciliation have suffered. Projects perceived as being in the nation's prime interest and which have tangible benefits could gain the support of influential government officials in sidestepping these roadblocks. For example, the entire program of agricultural cooperation between Egypt and Israel would not have survived the vicissitudes of political change but for the strong support of the deputy prime minister of Egypt. The relative autonomy of the Israeli institutions and the support of Israeli foreign policy establishment have also been critical factors.

Cooperation has benefited from the help of an influential supporter, Dr. Youssef Walli, the deputy prime minister and minister of agriculture. He has long been convinced that agricultural cooperation with Israel is essential to modernizing Egyptian agriculture in a cost-effective manner.

MERC projects in other sectors— marine, health, and environment— have generally not been perceived as matters of prime national interest and have not evoked strong support from the government, influential leaders, and powerful ministries and their clientele.

—Krishna Kumar with Irving Rosenthal

Finally, asymmetries in the infrastructure for scientific research—differing capacities as well as the extent of government control—affected performance and set boundaries around cooperation. These asymmetries made collaboration and establishing linkages both difficult and unlikely. This was particularly true of the earlier MERC projects. Recently, MERC-funded development has reduced some of these disparities, permitted more collaboration, and so augmented the possibility for reconciliation.

The 20-year chronicle of MERC project experience suggests certain policy lessons. Cooperative pursuits that emphasize realization of mutual objectives—such as solving problems, developing new technologies, or training scientists—can engender social reconciliation through proximity and joint effort. In some circumstances, such efforts can generate positive

images among the participants, promote long-term institutional linkages, and build political constituencies that sustain cooperation and the normalization of relations. However, the overall effects of such cooperation on social reconciliation are likely to be modest. In the postconflict setting, participants must be prepared to invoke different modalities of cooperation to expedite both implementation and reconciliation. Collaborative projects will receive more political backing if they concentrate on problems of paramount concern to both the governments involved and the people.

Media Projects In Bosnia and Herzegovina[*]

Prior to the outbreak of civil war, the Serb nationalists succeeded in using the media, particularly the broadcast media, to sow the seeds of ethnic chauvinism and antagonism. They utilized it to create new ethnic myths, to rewrite the history of interethnic relations with scant regard to the truth. They invariably depicted Serbs as victims of exploitation by other ethnic groups. Once the war broke out, Croats and Muslims used the media for the same purposes.

Consequently, the three major ethnic groups controlled individual segments of Bosnia's fragmented media during the conflict.

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[*]The case study on media interventions in Bosnia and Herzegovina was still in production at the time of this writing. The author has relied on the notes of Eileen Augenbraun and Susan Merrill, as well as on other material, published and unpublished.

Despite the cessation of hostilities after the 1995 Dayton Peace Accord, the situation has not changed much. The media continue to be divided throughout Bosnia's two entities: the Republika Sprska and the Bosniac–Croat Federation.

International media interventions were designed to accomplish two broad objectives: 1) to disseminate objective, unbiased information to counteract misinformation and vicious propaganda and 2) to support or establish socially responsible media outlets that can promote peace and tolerance.

First, to reach a greater audience, many international broadcasters expanded their programs and services in Yugoslav languages. The most influential of these broadcasters—BBC World Service, Deutsche Welle, Radio France Internationale, Radio Free Europe, and Voice of America—provided a balanced coverage of events. Local stations often picked up these programs, especially after the Dayton accords. In many instances, these broadcasts were the only sources of credible information.

Second, the international community provided extensive support to create and sustain those independent media outlets that could promote the peaceful resolution of the conflict. Bilateral and multilateral agencies invested considerable resources on such efforts. USAID alone had allocated $6 million to 43 media outlets by April 1997.

The international community funded many high-profile media initiatives. The Office of the High Representative (the agency coordinating the Dayton accords' civilian aspects) underwrote

the Open Broadcast Network, also known as TVIN, which prepares programs for five prominent Bosnian television stations. Efforts are being made to privatize TVIN, making it more broadly based and sustainable. The Swiss government supported the Free Elections Radio Network to provide unbiased coverage during the elections. FERN has correspondents all over Bosnia and transmits a mélange of liberal programs and modern music. USAID has funded an entirely new newspaper insert, *Ogledalo* ("Mirror"). It is printed in Cyrillic script for its Serb readership and in Latin script for its readers in the federation. Like FERN, *Ogledalo* has its own news correspondents. It is distributed free of charge inside other newspapers.

The independent media outlets received various types of assistance from the international community. We will limit discussion to three. First, outlets obtained financial assistance to purchase machinery and newsprint or to cover overhead costs. While donors followed different policies and used different criteria, subsidies were generally available to the interested outlets regardless of their long-term viability. Second, the international community helped the broadcast media to develop expertise in preparing and broadcasting interesting news and television programs.

The third form of assistance—short-term training for journalists—proved to be more problematic. The international community tried to address the shortage of professional journalists by sending experts to organize these training courses. However, most of these experts had little or no knowledge of the local languages. Often, they came with manuals that had little

relevance in the Bosnian context. Still worse, they competed with one another to recruit trainees; senior editors were usually reluctant to commit junior staff to training programs they viewed as both superficial and irrelevant.

Several factors affected the performance of media interventions. First, the international community did not formulate a long-term strategy to build an independent media. Often the projects were driven by the urgency of the situation rather than by a realistic assessment of needs and long-term viability. This was understandable, given the immediate necessity of counteracting misinformation, but it did result in a considerable waste of economic and human resources.

Second, donor coordination was practically nonexistent prior to the accords. Almost all major bilateral donor agencies vied to support media projects without consulting one another. In fact, they often competed in recruiting trainees or identifying potential candidates for financial assistance. This produced an unnecessary duplication of efforts. Only recently have the international agencies begun to coordinate their media efforts.

Third, the media projects were often assembled with minimal input from local stakeholders, partly because of the lack of local expertise and mainly because of the haste in which they were put together. No efforts were then made to create a sense of local ownership.

Fourth, the international community did not examine the viability of the alternate newspapers, journals, and radio stations it funded.

Finally, the overriding concern for social reconciliation occasionally led the funding agencies to exert subtle pressures on, if not control over, the media. For example, when Muslim listeners began to recall their wartime torture by Croats on Radio Mostar, the European Union administrator of Mostar warned the station director that this would heighten Muslim–Croat tensions. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (a pan-European security organization) and Radio FERN proscribed ethnically loaded phrases, and FERN even refused to play local music in case the lyrics contained hateful messages. Although such pressures may have been desirable to prevent ethnic tensions and to push social reconciliation forward, they did not help in institutionalizing the norms of a free press.

Absent hard data, it is difficult to assess how effective media projects were in reducing ethnic tensions or promoting interethnic tolerance. Anecdotal evidence suggests, though, that despite the limitations just mentioned, media interventions probably contributed to social reconciliation, if modestly. First, they helped to undermine the credibility of the state- and nationalist-controlled media. A growing segment of the people listened to the broadcasts by FERN, the Open Broadcast Network, and international news agencies or read newspapers and periodicals supported by the international community, thus getting unbiased information. Second, the projects helped create and nurture independent media, although those media still struggle to survive. Third, media assistance has bolstered the emerging moderate political leadership in Bosnia and Herzegovina, clearly a precondition for any reconciliation.

The experience of the international community in supporting media intervention points to a few policy lessons. First, it underscores the need for a coherent, long-term strategy to build and strengthen an independent, professional media. Such a strategy should attend to the various aspects of the media sector: the legal and regulatory framework, the training of journalists, technological improvement, and the economic viability of media outlets. Second, when there is a multiplicity of international actors, mechanisms for mutual consultation should be established to avoid duplication and to ensure that all components of the sector receive adequate support. Finally, the international community should recognize the trade-off between the need for promoting social reconciliation and the norms of freedom of press. The dividing line between "message" and "propaganda" is thin indeed.

Economic Reactivation And Interethnic Reconciliation[*]

The case study presented in this section explores the slightly different strategy pursued in Bosnia–Herzegovina and Croatia. In its efforts to restore peace and rehabilitate the shattered economy of the region, the international community has supported a vast array of projects that concentrate on microenterprises and small businesses, business organizations, and physical infrastructure. There are indications that in addition to reviving the economy, these eco-

nomic interventions contribute to social reconciliation. They generate, though in a limited fashion, interethnic cooperation, thus promoting mutual tolerance and understanding. Three categories of development interventions can be mentioned in this connection.

First, the international community has promoted microenterprises as well as small businesses to generate employment and income. Such projects have particularly targeted returning refugees, internally displaced persons, and female-headed households. They have provided short- and medium-term loans, and occasionally technical assistance, to these new entrepreneurs.

Such efforts have partly alleviated the suffering of the highly vulnerable groups. But they seem to have had only a modest effect in promoting social reconciliation. By their nature, microenterprises tend to have limited backward and forward linkages to the larger economy. They employ family labor and cater to local markets. As a result, they do not generate opportunities for interethnic interactions. Small business ventures are only slightly better, to the extent they are more prone to seek labor and capital, as well as markets, beyond family and immediate community—undertakings that increase opportunities for interaction.

In many cases the international community has encouraged joint business enterprises involving members of different ethnic groups.

> **As one interviewee has stated, "Commerce is ethnically blind; we buy and sell to whoever pays."**
>
> **—Myra Dautovitch Business Center, Travnik**

For example, in the divided city of Gornji Vakuf, two women (one Muslim and the other Croat) established a cottage industry producing knit garments. They exported their products to Scandinavian countries and received marketing and design expertise from abroad. The Travnik Business Center, a nonprofit organization, formed a solidarity group consisting of Muslims, Croats, and Serbs. The group worked together in producing poultry. One individual produced eggs, another chickens, and the third egg cartons. Such multiethnic ventures have been few so far. Moreover, they have generally depended on international assistance. It remains to be seen if they would be competitive in the absence of outside support.

Second, the international community has supported the creation of economic organizations—financial intermediaries, economic associations, and informal groups—to spur economic development. These organizations tend to have an ethnically mixed management and staff. For example, the international community has supported integrated financial intermediary organizations that can reach out to different ethnic groups. Such financial institutions have been instrumental in creating ethnically blind business ventures, hiring multiethnic employees, establishing multiethnic boards of directors, and catering to multiethnic markets.

Economic associations, often revived or created with the assistance of the international community, are also emerging as voices of mod-

eration and interethnic cooperation. The imperatives of the market economy force these organizations to move toward some integration. For example, a small business organization existed in the multiethnic city of Tuzla before the war. USAID's grant enabled it to establish the Independent Association of Businessmen of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The association works to facilitate business ventures and restore trade between the entities. The common economic interests of its many members have pushed the association to lobby for economic policies it views as favorable to business.

Finally, the international community has provided massive resources to rehabilitate the devastated physical infrastructure—utilities, roads, bridges, railways, airports, telephones, and telecommunication. Such reconstruction has expanded economic opportunities and generated modest growth. Movement of goods and people between the two entities has increased. It is too early to assess the effects of infrastructure rehabilitation on interethnic relations, but there is little doubt it has been contributing to the economic and political integration of the region. Such integration can act as the foundation for ethnic tolerance.

The international support to economic reactivation programs in post-Dayton Bosnia and Herzegovina presents an important lesson. Interethnic reconciliation need not rely solely on the traditional social reconciliation programs outlined in the first chapter of this study. Interventions that allow groups to capitalize on mutual economic interests also provide some momentum toward social reconciliation and tolerance. A variety of economic development initiatives can serve this purpose within certain bounds.

> **In Osijek, in Croatia, USAID has funded Opportunity International to establish a small lending organization, commonly known by its acronym, NOA, to provide loans in Eastern Slavonia. . . . NOA is an example of a project designed to cross community and ethnic factions. Its board of directors . . . includes a Serb, Croat, Muslim, Hungarian, and Albanian. Each individual serves as a contact from his or her community to the project. Loan officers are both Serb and Muslim.**
>
> **—Eliene Augenbraun and others**

3 Policy Lessons

A S OUTLINED in the foregoing chapters, these case studies are instructive, deepening our understanding of the limitations and possibilities inherent in social reconciliation interventions. They also suggest a few policy lessons, elaborated below.

1. Social reconciliation interventions, whether directly or indirectly supported by the international community, generally have a positive impact on postconflict societies.

USAID's experience indicates that all three social reconciliation strategies—creating and supporting grass-roots peace structures, peace media, and collaborative projects—have some value. Specific interventions can contribute to reducing social tensions and fostering intergroup tolerance.

Peace committees in South Africa helped reduce the magnitude of violence. They helped create a social space for dialog and contributed to crisis prevention in many communities. Media projects in Bosnia helped, though on a limited scale, to counteract extremist misinformation and propaganda. They also helped create alternative media outlets. Scientific cooperation in the Middle East positively affected the attitudes and perceptions of the participants. Once people met in a professional context, their old stereotypes and prejudices dissipated. Cooperative projects generated new institutions and created political constituencies in Egypt that had a stake in continuing cooperation and therefore promoting social reconciliation. In Bosnia, economic development projects have either sought to fund intentionally multiethnic business ventures or to develop a sense of shared economic interest that transcends ethnic considerations.

2. Taken in context, the impact of internationally supported social reconciliation has recognizable limits.

Although social reconciliation interventions foster dialog or cooperative action, as intended, the cases presented suggest that overall impact is modest indeed. Even the peace committees, which probably performed better than the other types of interventions, had a mixed record. While they were effective in West Cape, they did not take root in the KwaZulu–Natal and Witsvaal regions. Moreover, even in the geographical regions where they were effective, they could not prevent all violent conflicts. The

media interventions in Bosnia and Herzegovina have encountered many obstacles since their inception, including opposition from nationalist parties. A significant number of new media outlets supported by these projects foundered. An alternative media continues to grow, fueled by donor funds.

The scientific collaboration program in the Middle East has affected only a small number of scientists and institutions and has not had a significant impact beyond the scientific community. A sense of realism is needed about the effectiveness of social reconciliation programs. Unrealistic expectations breed unjustifiable frustration.

3. Three environmental variables—political commitment, indigenous ownership, and perceived fairness—are critical to the effectiveness of social reconciliation interventions.

All the design, performance, and environmental factors that explain the relative success of development projects in general are relevant to social reconciliation interventions; beyond that, political commitment, local ownership, and perceived fairness also appear to be critical to their success.

Political commitment. The peace committees had a national mandate; they enjoyed the political support of national leaders. Even when national support did not translate into local support, it was still a major factor for legitimacy and credibility at the local level. The scientific collaboration program in the Middle East survived mainly because of the continual support of the powerful deputy prime minister of Egypt

and those actors in the Israeli foreign policy establishment who viewed cooperation as being in the national interest. Such political commitment—at both the national and local levels—was often missing for social reconciliation initiatives in Bosnia, and that blunted the projects' effectiveness.

Local ownership. The South Africans themselves organized and instituted the peace committees; international involvement was limited, at best. MERC awarded grants for projects designed and submitted by participating institutions and agencies. Once the grants were awarded, the scientists and their institutions enjoyed complete freedom. Thus the sense of indigenous ownership was high in these projects. In sharp contrast, where such ownership was absent in Bosnian social reconciliation projects, they were perceived as international efforts.

Perceived fairness. In South Africa, adversaries appreciated peace committee efforts to take a balanced approach. Often the peace committees assigned two individuals to a task in order to produce a rough political balance. In most cases, MERC grants established parity between Egyptian and Israeli institutions, and consequently participants from both countries viewed them as fair. The situation was different in the volatile Bosnian environment. Serb extremists always resented international involvement and perceived all assistance programs as skewed in favor of the Muslims and Croats.

4. The involvement of a neutral third party can be useful in deeply divided societies.

The role of outsiders in the promotion of social reconciliation presents something of a paradox. On the one hand, local ownership of the program is essential. Social reconciliation interventions can hardly succeed if conflicting groups are not involved in design and implementation. On the other hand, in some contexts, neutral parties may be in a position to launch reconciliation projects. Without the direct involvement of USAID, the MERC program in the Middle East would not have become a reality. In Bosnia, only the international community was in a position to support reconciliation initiatives. The various adversaries had neither the political will nor the resources to design and implement them.

5. Because of the social, cultural, and political sensibilities involved, it is essential that designers of social reconciliation projects consider factors not always salient in traditional development interventions.

First, they should pay attention to local culture, traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution, and local power structures. They should consider the values, beliefs, and perceptions of the people. Second, they should seek to lower the level of public visibility, when possible. Had they had higher profiles, many MERC projects would not have taken off. Low public profile has also assisted projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Finally, project designers should consider the singular problems that intergroup hostilities pose for project staff and participants.

6. To enhance opportunities for social reconciliation, innovative strategies and instruments should channel technical and financial assistance to indigenous organiza-tions without forcing them to compromise their legitimacy, autonomy, and flexibility.

All of the case studies underscore the need for innovative strategies and instruments, particularly when channeling assistance to indigenous organizations. In South Africa, practically all international assistance was indirect. The peace committees remained a largely indigenous effort. The MERC program's reliance on intermediary institutions—universities, research institutes, and nongovernmental organizations—to manage the grants enabled local actors to view MERC as a scientific research program rather than as a social reconciliation effort. This contributed its political and intellectual legitimacy. Most of the resources for social reconciliation projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina have been channeled through international private voluntary organizations. This was necessary during the conflict; afterward, indigenous NGOs resented the considerable resources that PVOs expended on expatriate staff, travel, and office equipment, rather than on programs.

7. Carefully designed economic development interventions can foster varying levels of cooperation and therefore tolerance among antagonistic groups.

The experience of Bosnia and Herzegovina demonstrates that interventions in economic development can promote social reconciliation in postconflict societies. For example, the vast array of economic development projects, ranging from support to small businesses to the rehabilitation of physical infrastructure, has created both incentives and opportunities for mutually beneficial multiethnic inter-

action. Guided by the profit motive, farmers, businessmen, and entrepreneurs are forging ties that transcend ethnic boundaries.

8. As far as possible, the international community should support development interventions that are informed by a social reconciliation approach.

Such an approach will require that

a. Designers critically examine all possible consequences—both intended and unintended—for social reconciliation. For example, when initially preparing structural adjustment programs, USAID should analyze possible effects on the relations between former adversaries. If a planned intervention is likely to foster severe intergroup competition or hostility, it should be revised, with adequate safeguards adopted.

b. As far as possible, development initiatives be designed and implemented such that they augment social capital—norms of tolerance, cooperation, and trust—in that society.

c. The project and program staff be exposed to conflict management and resolution techniques. They should be sensitive to existing perceptions, intergroup relations, local power structures, and indigenous approaches to conflict resolution.

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