



# Small Money, Big Impact

Foundations for Peace

The importance of philanthropic contributions to social justice and peacebuilding work in divided and conflict-torn societies



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Cover picture: Foundations for Peace member the Dalit  
Foundation believes it is important to bring social change by  
both empowering the marginalized, such as the women in this  
dalit self-help group in Jehenabad, India, and challenging the  
stereotypes and assumptions of powerful groups.

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# Contents

Foreword 5

Our understanding of social justice, peacebuilding and philanthropy 7

## **Case studies**

**1** Tackling conflict in Sri Lanka 10

**2** Restoration and reparation in Colombia 18

**3** Working with political ex-prisoners in Northern Ireland 27

**4** Police-Arab initiatives in Israel 35

**5** Peacebuilding and social justice in Nepal 43

**6** Whose justice counts in Bangladesh 49

**7** Social transformation in India 56

**8** Accelerating change for equality in India 64

**9** A poor woman's house in Serbia 71

Drawing the threads together: the role of philanthropy in social justice  
and peacebuilding 77

About Foundations for Peace 84



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## Foreword

*Small Money, Big Impact* is a report drawn from the combined experiences of nine independent charitable trusts and foundations. What is both unique and compelling about these organizations is that they are all indigenous to, and working in, societies that have been marked by deep communal divisions and violent conflict. They share a commitment to social justice and peacebuilding in often difficult and complex circumstances. This report discusses the relationship between social justice and peacebuilding while reflecting on the added value of using indigenous foundations to deliver local programmes in areas of conflict and division.

The foundations and trusts worked together to deliver this report, which was enabled through a small grant from the Working Group on Philanthropy for Social Justice and Peace, an initiative of the Ford Foundation. The case studies have been contributed by:

- The Abraham Fund Initiatives (TAFI), Israel and USA
- Community Foundation for Northern Ireland (CFNI), Northern Ireland
- Dalit Foundation (DF), India
- Fundación AlvarAlice (AA), Colombia
- Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF), Bangladesh
- Neelan Tiruchelvam Trust (NTT), Sri Lanka
- Nirnaya, India
- Reconstruction Women's Fund (RWF), Serbia
- Tewa, Nepal

All of these foundations – alongside TASO, the Georgian Women's Fund, which recently joined the network in 2009 – are members of the Foundations for Peace Network, which was initiated in 2003 with the mission of developing a network of independent indigenous funders that work locally in order to advance social justice and peacebuilding in areas of entrenched and persistent communal conflict.

The Foundations for Peace Network believes that philanthropy both can and should make a commitment to addressing these issues in partnership with local independent funders to draw maximum long-term benefit locally while contributing to global learning.



Santosh Samal  
 Chair, Foundations for Peace



## Our understanding of social justice, peacebuilding and philanthropy

To achieve social justice outcomes it is necessary to adopt a lens of philanthropy which seeks out core inequalities in terms of the distribution of power, resources, recognition and esteem. However, philanthropy must go further than identifying issues and challenges; it also has to underpin the work of individuals and organizations that are seeking to achieve structural change, and to work with those groups in society that are most excluded from power and decision making. Philanthropy for social justice is philanthropy of challenge, which is committed to building the capacity of people who are disenfranchised while addressing the root causes of injustice, understanding that the latter can also be a contributory cause of violent conflict.

Peacebuilding is an inclusive and grounded approach to conflict prevention, conflict resolution and conflict transformation. It goes beyond traditional diplomatic security strategies (peacekeeping), as well as being more participative than political agreements (peacemaking). Peacebuilding recognizes the importance of the role of community level work to offer alternatives to violent conflict, alongside the middle-range institutional and academic contribution, with both being linked to the top leadership involved in peace negotiations. This is a perspective that is open to seeing the relationship between structural violence – whereby specific groups and classes within society experience discrimination, oppression and marginalization – and the need to address such issues in order to avert, or provide an alternative to, violent conflict.

New views: the police-Arab community initiative of Foundations for Peace member TAFI hopes to change old attitudes and build relationships of trust to foster cooperation between the police and local Arab leaders and help them more effectively handle conflict.





If both social justice and peacebuilding require an interrogation and a rebalancing of power relationships within divided societies, then it is important that philanthropic endeavours are value-driven, sensitive and reflective in nature. Arguably, local indigenous funders are well placed to provide the added value dimension to a philanthropy that values participation in the process of change. Local funders can introduce developmental strategies combined with their convening and analytical roles to complement the distribution of grants. They can also provide the linkage between collaboratives of funders who are committed to peacebuilding and addressing related issues of social justice. In addition, the guarantee that indigenous funders can offer to those that they partner with to engage in each local context is not only their long-term commitment to change but also the fact that they must live, on a day-to-day basis, with the funding decisions made in the knowledge that they, too, are actors in a common cause.

The members of the Foundations for Peace Network are working in many different societal and political contexts. A number are still caught in ongoing violent conflict, while others are in the process of conflict transformation. There are also examples of societies where the emphasis is on confronting aspects of social injustice, the denial of rights and structural inequalities that have either previously led to conflict or retain the potential to be a cause of violence. Whatever these differences, network members share a commitment to building those small but crucial bridges at local level that enable communities within contested societies to at least hear the perceived 'other'; to examine the issues; and to analyse the responsibility of the state and its citizens. They also share a willingness to reflect collectively on practice and past experience and to learn from each other.

.....  
Youth work: an annual peace song competition is held for young people in Nepal to create their own lyrics with folk music, which Tewa feels is vital to preserve the local oral culture while highlighting positive messages to the performers and listeners alike.



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## Sharing insight and experience

The Foundations for Peace Network has the mission of developing a network of independent, indigenous funders that can share their unique insights and experience in working locally to advance equality, diversity and interdependence in areas of entrenched and persistent communal conflict. The network has a commitment to peace and non-violence, as well as

respect for human rights. One of its strategic goals is to inform, promote and thereby increase the flow of philanthropic funds to support the work of indigenous peacebuilding foundations across the world.

### **For more information**

[www.foundationsforpeace.org](http://www.foundationsforpeace.org)

The Foundations for Peace Network and its members would like to express their appreciation to the Ford Foundation Working Group on Philanthropy for Social Justice and Peace for its support in helping them to progress this important exchange. The diverse case studies, together with the concluding section, have been compiled in the hope that discussion can be encouraged both on the role of philanthropy for social justice and peace and on how indigenous and international funders can work more collaboratively on issues of shared interest.

A common theme underlying the case studies is how small amounts of money can leverage major impact in terms of building solidarity and partnerships for social change. To maximize this effectiveness, however, indigenous funders need external as well as internal partnerships and support. It can be extremely difficult to raise the necessary philanthropic funds from within societies in conflict, given the unwillingness of many to be seen to be involved. There is also a draw on the time resource of local funders who are actively adopting a developmental approach to complement fund development. Consequently, it is important for relationships to be established between local funders and those international philanthropic and donor organizations that have an interest in peacebuilding and social justice. The bringing together of the local experience with external support and interest can ensure that small money is available to achieve the big impact that is so necessary in situations of conflict.

The potential to generate real learning from such partnerships is immense. An important aspect of such learning is the fact that it is rooted in the concrete experience of trusts and foundations working within their local context at different points on the continuum of communal tension, conflict, conflict transformation and peacebuilding. The case studies included in this report reflect philanthropic action in these different circumstances. They are presented in the spirit of sharing experience and promoting discussion on the role of philanthropy for social justice and peacebuilding, both nationally and internationally.

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## Case study 1 Tackling conflict in Sri Lanka

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### Empowerment from the grassroots

For Sri Lanka's Neelan Tiruchelvam Trust, challenging existing structures must be seen as a long-term process in traditionally hierarchical societies, where democracy is viewed as the rule of the individual or group placed in power by the majority, rather than as the means for each person's voice to be heard. Such a challenge is both important and difficult at times of violent conflict, when social, legal and political

structures often sideline the voices of victims and minorities. Prepared as the recent conflict reached a climax and focused on the work of the group Survivors Associated in eastern Sri Lanka, this case study suggests that grassroots empowerment to give each individual and community a voice is the first step towards a just society.

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Fears forgotten: while stress management programmes are conducted for mothers in a village, games, dancing and other activities are organized for children who have experienced trauma.



## Neelan Tiruchelvam Trust

Neelan Tiruchelvam Trust (NTT) was founded in Sri Lanka in 2001, following the assassination of the lawyer, politician and peace activist Dr Neelan Tiruchelvam. NTT supports organizations that mobilize and motivate disempowered people by building their self-confidence and skills to foster more peaceful and equitable relationships among communities divided by ethnicity, religion and economic disparity. Survivors Associated (SA) has

been involved in providing psychosocial support to those in Sri Lanka affected by conflict and disaster since 1996. NTT's support of SA's work involved a total funding of US\$32,415, plus US\$735 for the urgent-action 'contingency fund', which helped leverage additional funds from other sources.

### For more information

[www.neelan.org](http://www.neelan.org)

Sri Lanka has experienced ethnic conflict for many years. Living amid the conflict were the majority ethnic group of Sinhalese alongside Tamils, Muslims, Burghers and other minorities. Armed conflict waxed and waned between the government, its paramilitaries, and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Conflict led to the armed forces and police being given special powers of arrest and detention under the Prevention of Terrorism Act and the Emergency Regulations, which have been abused and used with impunity to commit and justify rights violations.

The most recent phase of armed conflict saw escalating human rights violations, with extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, abductions, and the general breakdown of the rule of law. The parties to the conflict exhibited scant regard for international humanitarian law in the conduct of military operations, which killed more than 700,000 and displaced nearly 600,000 people from a population of approximately 20 million.

The 30-year civil war came to a bloody end in May 2009 when the LTTE surrendered. The death and casualty levels were inordinately high, particularly among the civilians of Sri Lanka's north and east. Displaced several times from their original homes, more than 280,000 survivors have been placed in internment-like camps with poor conditions until they have been investigated for 'terrorist' connections. There is growing concern among the rest of civil society about the needs of these people. The end of the war has left unresolved issues and unanswered questions about the relationship between the state and the rest of society.

## Collaborating in a context of conflict

As a response to growing human rights abuses during earlier phases of the armed conflict, such as the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna uprisings of 1971 and 1987–9, NTT formulated a joint action plan with SA and four other partners, the Centre for Human Rights and Development, Civil Action Alliance, Right to Life, and the Law and Society Trust (LST). To be both pragmatic and strategic in their work, NTT and its partners made a conscious decision to be inclusive by focusing on rights violations throughout the conflict instead of merely those committed in recent times. The advantage of this approach was that it involved violations experienced by both

majority and minority communities. Amid an atmosphere of fear, NTT has functioned as a trust broker, encouraging all partners to collaborate, share information and determine their most effective roles. Interventions were planned collectively by the five organizations with NTT support, and ranged from provision of legal and psychosocial support to documenting gross human rights violations and advocacy at national and international level through the use of international human rights mechanisms.

The partnership between the five organizations has greatly strengthened mutual collaboration and trust. A referral system to facilitate legal and psychosocial support to clients approaching any of the partners, the provision of case histories to LST for advocacy through UN human rights mechanisms, and having partner support to face challenges, such as arbitrary arrests of staff, has meant that the systems are fully in place for closer collaboration, in the absence of more permanent provisions of support by the government.

## Serving communities, responding to displacement

As well as action in the tsunami's aftermath, SA's work providing psychosocial support has spanned a considerable period of the conflict, as well as phases of relative peace with rehabilitation and resettlement, and the most recent phase of open warfare. It works with those traumatized as a result of the armed conflict and the tsunami, those differently-abled and those enmeshed in poverty. After establishing district offices in the north and east of the country, the areas hardest hit by conflict, SA extended its work to the west and south following the tsunami and now operates in eight of Sri Lanka's 25 districts. Work in the north and east continues in an environment of frequent violence, and SA's staff have been displaced and resettled many times with the communities they serve.

The staff for SA are recruited from among the communities expected to be given support, which ensures sustainability and retains the knowledge gained to benefit people within that community. Staff receive initial training in 'befriending' and approximately a year later in 'community counselling'. SA continues training staff to give them extra skills reflecting local needs, from conflict resolution, care of differently-abled people and supporting torture survivors to small business counselling. SA's staff from across the diverse geographical regions of Sri Lanka all train together, which offers an opportunity for staff members to increase their understanding, respect and experience of different cultures as well as community development and self-development.

Trained befrienders and community counsellors are allocated to a number of villages, with small business counsellors designated to a group of villages. Supervising counsellors, who have been trained in therapeutic counselling, are responsible for the supervision of a district. Field officers manage the administration of a district office, while district coordinators support and supervise the work of a group of district offices. The Kalmunai district office in eastern Sri Lanka, observed for this case study, had five befrienders, five community counsellors, one small business counsellor, one supervising counsellor who also functioned as the field officer, and a district coordinator. Activities undertaken included organizing support

groups, play groups and home visits. The staff also facilitate microeconomic and livelihood schemes for the support groups. At the time of this case study, the 12 staff of Kalmunai district were facilitating 17 support groups and 15 play groups.

## Developing leadership skills in local groups

Once a village is chosen, empowerment and awareness programmes are conducted, based on the support groups formed. Support group participants include women living below the poverty line, those affected by conflict or disaster, differently-abled people and their caregivers, and torture survivors. Stress management programmes are conducted for mothers in the village and play groups are organized for children experiencing stress or trauma. Home visits extend the support for both the children of the play groups and their mothers. Local staff trained in leadership, facilitation and negotiation help form the support groups and then develop leadership from within the group by transferring their skills so leaders can organize the group's meetings and activities.

.....  
 Hope for the future: play groups are an important way to help children affected by conflict, as part of wider efforts to support families and their communities.



## ..... Framework and analysis

Social justice is the right to universal equitable access to goods and services guaranteed by any democratic state. Social justice philanthropy seeks to address causes rather than alleviating symptoms, using a bottom-up approach, giving voice to those most affected by social problems, and providing access to power and the tools to challenge existing discriminatory structures. At a conceptual level, this follows the path to peacebuilding envisioned by the Foundations for Peace Network through empowering the victim-survivor, an approach reflected by SA in its programmes that aim to 'help people fight their

own battles'. In line with the psychosocial framework prepared by the Psychosocial Working Group of international aid agencies and academic institutions,<sup>1</sup> SA seeks to provide holistic services that enhance wellbeing in terms of human capacity while being sensitive to prevalent cultural values and beliefs, and taking into consideration the physical, environmental, economic and political resources available to the communities served.

<sup>1</sup> [www.forcedmigration.org/psychosocial/papers/A framework for Practice.pdf](http://www.forcedmigration.org/psychosocial/papers/A%20framework%20for%20Practice.pdf)

The space provided by the support groups is conducive to rethinking the future, opening up previously unseen options and countering individuals' feelings of hopelessness, helplessness and victimhood. That space encourages and enables individuals to engage with others in similar circumstances. The support groups are often the only window into the world outside for many people. These can include those homebound due to household and family responsibilities, such as childcare, care of the differently-abled or the elderly, or due to the social stigma of being differently-abled, or being a widow. Some confine themselves due to the psychological impact of torture. The success of others in similar situations functions as a source of encouragement and provides them with ideas and options for breaking away from their victimhood. The achievements of group members bolster the sense of self-worth among participants, offering a means of gaining respect and recognition within the village, which is a deeply felt need and highly valued in communal, hierarchical societies, such as those in rural Sri Lanka.

## Building in mutual accountability

Working with groups rather than individuals provides an inbuilt means of monitoring as participants hold each other accountable for the development of the group and its members. This makes the work more efficient, increases understanding among members and acts as a motivational force that makes the development of both the group and individuals sustainable. These group characteristics, backed by staff training in communication, interpersonal skills, power dynamics and problem solving, are resources that support the development of groups and individuals as local leaders. Traditionally, family and community links have been strong, making family and community counselling rather than individual counselling even more relevant.

In one area interventions for individuals may be essential. Given the hierarchical social order and power dynamics of rural areas of Sri Lanka, it has been found that systems of 'referral' for individuals needing services, often considered the norm within humanitarian and psychosocial services, are not effective. Referring a person would have to go beyond the provision of an address and name to be contacted, and even beyond an accompanying letter. Village residents seeking a service find the power dynamics working against them. This situation often requires personal intervention by field workers, whose uniform or organization identity card puts them in a more favourable position to tilt the dynamics of the situation to the advantage of the person seeking services. Staff often accompany clients to meet officials or service providers about the material or service needs of individuals or their communities.

## Advantages in partnerships

In backing SA, the NTT assists the training of befrienders and community counsellors, support groups and play groups, counselling home visits, the organization's newsletter, and a contingency fund for use in instances of emergency responses to human rights violations. SA's work was hampered when funding



constraints suspended vital training for community counsellors for more than two years. Recognizing the importance of SA's initiative, NTT stepped in with funds for 2008 and 2009 to enable SA to maintain its programmes. NTT's strategic partnerships also offer SA opportunities for networking and advocacy collaborations. For example, when SA counsellors gather in the capital Colombo for periodic training, LST and other partner organizations engage with them to collate information on human rights violations for use in their advocacy efforts. SA also provides counselling support to those referred by partners.

The contingency fund provided by NTT is of particular importance as it supports the full costs of interventions that respond to human rights violations, including such overheads as transport and paperwork. In a recent incident, in which an SA staff member was arrested despite possessing the required documents, the organization incurred costs met by the contingency fund that could not have been found under any other circumstance. The contingency fund also provides support for victim and witness protection initiatives requiring immediate and confidential responses.

## Group support for greater saving

Among group members in communities assisted by SA, poverty is a common factor. Savings were required to create sufficient capital to develop means of livelihood. Support groups are trained in saving methods, such as opening bank accounts and documenting finances. Those with limited or no literacy have the group's support in dealing with banks. Group members support each other in saving, while some have found confidence from the group to attempt to learn to write their names.

After six months or more of successful saving, organizations supporting microcredit usually provide Rs 15,000–20,000 (US\$140–230) per group. This money is managed by the group, in addition to its savings, to provide loans to its members and can make a significant impact. For example, a support group in the village of Mavadippalli in eastern Sri Lanka, which received funding of Rs 5,000 four years ago and an additional Rs 25,000 one year ago, has through savings and loans provided to its members increased its group savings to Rs 200,000. Microcredit is also an example of the leverage possible with indigenous foundation funding. Although NTT's mandate does not include economic empowerment, once SA is operating in an area with NTT support, it is able to channel funds for economic support from other sources.

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### 'I am able to support my children'

'I have three children and I didn't have any means of looking after them. My wife has mental health issues, so she cannot look after them either. She now lives with her family. I was not able to move as I could not use

my legs but with the loan I was able to set up a bicycle repair shop and I am able to support my children. I have also learned to ride a bicycle now.'

*Man, 50, who rode 7 kilometres for a group meeting*



Psychosocial supporters: for counsellors recruited from the communities they will assist, group work is part of their training to help those traumatized by conflict or disaster.



Support groups select representatives who are then given training in entrepreneurship and transfer the knowledge to other group members. Small business counsellors continue to support the group and its individuals in identifying and setting up small businesses. These enterprises could include cultivating and selling small quantities of vegetables, preparing and selling noodles, or roasting, packing and selling peanuts. For peanuts, the loan would go towards buying the roasting pot and perhaps a bicycle for selling peanuts further afield.

In traditionally hierarchical societies, even those that are democracies, challenging existing structures must be seen as a long-term process. The structures of such societies often do not support the voices of victim empowerment at the various levels – individual or personal, social, political, cultural, legal and economic – required to ensure the creation of a just society.<sup>2</sup> Empowerment at the grassroots level is therefore the first step towards a just society, in which each individual and community has a 'voice'.

<sup>2</sup> Birte Rodenberg and Christa Wichterich (1999) *Empowerment: Study of the women's projects abroad supported by the Heinrich Böll Foundation*, Berlin, Heinrich Böll Foundation, cited in *Victim Empowerment and Peacebuilding* (2008) Foundations for Peace, Belfast.

## Entrepreneur Sheeba

Sheeba – not her real name – 30, of Nintavur, is separated from her husband. With no help, work or business, she struggled to support herself and her young child until she was invited to be a part of a support group. Although she was not used to venturing out of her home alone, since joining the

group she has not only become a representative of the support group but has travelled to the capital Colombo, where she received entrepreneurship training. She has taken out a loan to start a small shop, which provides both for herself and for her child.

## Bringing power to the disempowered

Acquiring skills in communication, problem solving, interpersonal relations and negotiation leads to the personal empowerment of staff from each community and, through them, of the support groups and their individual members. Support groups offer power to disempowered individuals, and through them enable empowerment of those sectors, such as women, ethnic or religious groups, or those differently-abled, who have been discriminated against or marginalized due to gender, stigma or economic disparity. The holistic care of SA also provides impetus for economic empowerment. Within the mandate of the organization and the sociopolitical context in which it functions, this bottom-up approach seeks to build peace through the empowerment of different sectors, which provides tools for challenging hegemonic social power structures.

Though legal and political empowerment is imperative, these are still a step away. As solutions to ultimately overcome the current injustices and challenge existing power structures would require legal and political empowerment, the strategic partnership between NTT, SA and their other partners enables empowerment in these areas. Time, resources and careful nurturing of these strategic partnerships would be required to find the most appropriate methods of working to bring about change and formulate solutions towards a just society.

## Case Study 2 Restoration and reparation in Colombia

### Addressing social injustices

All too often the social injustices suffered by victims of violence, if left unaddressed, can undermine any attempt at sustainable peacebuilding. This case study of the work of Colombia's Fundación AlvarAlice (AA) highlights how an indigenous funder can use its funds and networking to build local capacity for change and initiate channels for second track diplomacy to

deliver reparation and reintegration opportunities for victims of the long Colombian conflict. For AA and its partners, non-monetary resources were equally important in developing quiet strategies that formed the basis for policy change and peacebuilding overtures.

Opening doors: to contribute to peacebuilding in Colombia, Fundación AlvarAlice convened a meeting of experts in Paris to consider what could be part of a humanitarian agreement on prisoner exchange.



### Fundación AlvarAlice

Based in Cali, Colombia, and established in 2003 by the children of Alvaro Garces Giraldo and Alice Echavarría Olozaga, Fundación AlvarAlice (AA) works alone and with partner organizations to address issues of conflict transformation, victim empowerment and peacebuilding, in part by building local capacities to achieve social justice, and restoration and reparation for victims of the country's conflict. Having generated

significant non-monetary resources, it used grants totalling US\$107,000 to influence government legislation and spending commitments worth millions of dollars on restoration and reparation for Colombia's conflict victims.

**For more information**  
[www.alvaralice.org](http://www.alvaralice.org)

Social justice has been associated with the universal and equitable access of all people to the rights, goods and services that any modern democratic society must guarantee its citizens. As important as social justice appears to be, it may not seem a priority for governments and civil society, especially in a country of entrenched violence. In Colombia, a nation with decades of armed conflict and millions of victims – those displaced, killed, injured, kidnapped, disabled or subject to sexual aggression, and their families – social justice and peacebuilding must become the priority causes both for governments and philanthropists alike.

That was the rationale behind the concerted efforts towards restoration and reparation for the victims of the Colombian armed conflict that the small indigenous foundation AlvarAlice started in 2005. As well as acting itself, the foundation fostered the participation of others in the Colombian philanthropic sector in actions aimed at achieving social justice for those millions of victims of violence and violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. With comparatively small grants from the US Tinker Foundation and the Open Society Institute, AA activities included promoting favourable public policy towards victims, capacity building workshops, publications, convening talks among important political actors, and unofficial 'track two' diplomacy.

## Drug trade and decades of conflict

Colombia's conflict began more than half a century ago in a peasant guerrilla uprising. The first illegal armed group was the Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC), a Marxist-led movement influenced by Cuba's revolution and the Soviet Union. The FARC remains Colombia's largest guerrilla organization with an estimated 15,000 combatants. A second group of 5,000–8,000 members, known as the National Liberation Army (ELN), originated as a movement with roots among intellectuals and students, with Marxist-Leninist influences and early Cuban support. The United Self-defense Forces of Colombia (AUC), known as the 'paramilitaries', began operations in the early 1980s with support from landowners affected by the extortion and kidnappings by guerrillas in rural areas. According to information gathered during the current demobilization process, there were over 30,000 paramilitaries. The drug trade fuels the Colombian conflict, providing an estimated US\$3–4 billion over the past five years, during which time more than 70,000 people have been killed and about 3 million displaced, which led the United Nations to consider the Colombian conflict as one of the world's worst humanitarian crises.

In 2005, two years after being established, Fundación AlvarAlice organized the International Symposium on Restorative Justice and Peace in Colombia. Participation in the symposium included senior public officials, congressmen and academics, and attracted broad media coverage. As an intended effect, restoration concepts and practical procedures were later included in the Justice and Peace Bill. AA then presented a project to take forward the symposium's work to the Tinker Foundation. The project aimed to consolidate and disseminate the symposium's outcome to legislators, public officials, police, judiciary, civil society organizations and indigenous groups, and 'assist the Colombian government in the process of mediation (towards reparation and reconciliation) and facilitation for a peaceful ending of the conflict'.<sup>1</sup> Achieving social justice was considered the basis of a long-lasting peace.

<sup>1</sup> 'Full proposal: Restorative justice and peacebuilding in Colombia', presented to the Tinker Foundation Incorporated on 15 March 2005.

## Confessions, reparations and the law

To confront the challenges emerging from the armed conflict, in 2005 the Colombian government enacted the Justice and Peace Law, under which members of illegal armed groups may obtain some benefits if they disarm, contribute to dismantling their criminal organization, confess their crimes and commit to compensate their victims. Those leaders and combatants who are convicted face sentences of

no less than five and no more than eight years if they fully comply with the criteria, including reparations to victims. According to a recent sentence issued by the constitutional court, which endorsed the new law, those convicted should compensate the victims not only by returning their illegally obtained assets, but also with their own legally held resources.

The Tinker Foundation's initial grant of US\$68,000 and an additional US\$39,000 from the Open Society Institute (OSI) were used to finance the following components:

- promoting favourable public policies towards victims of conflict, such as including restoration principles and practices in the Justice and Peace Law passed in 2005;
- capacity building workshops on subjects already on the public agenda – peacebuilding, social justice, truth, reparation to victims – because of the new Justice and Peace Law and National Reparation and Reconciliation Commission (NRRC) with its eight-year mandate;
- track two diplomacy, such as preparing a concept paper on the United Nations' role in the Colombian conflict, an unofficial trip by vice-president Francisco Santos to South Africa and using other countries' experiences of demilitarized zones for government-guerrilla prisoner talks.

AA organized the first series of workshops in late 2005 on 'Reparation processes within the framework of the Justice and Peace Law', together with Colombia's vice-presidential office in Bogotá. Invited as keynote speakers were two former members of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), Fazel Randeria and Mary Burton, the first white woman to join Nelson Mandela's African National Congress. The first seminar involved members of the NRRC, Supreme Court, Judiciary Council, Peoples Advocate, Attorney General's office, peace judges, officials from the vice president's office and that of the Higher Commissioner for Peace dealing with social justice, victims' rights and peace building initiatives under the newly enacted Justice and Peace Law. The second seminar involved members of governmental organizations, such as the Colombian Family Welfare Institute, General Prosecutor's office, district attorneys, National Apprenticeship Service, Peoples Advocate's office, indigenous groups, victim's representatives, religious representatives, displaced people organizations, peace counsellors, and officials dealing with ex-combatant reintegration.

## A watchdog for reconciliation

The National Reparation and Reconciliation Commission (NRRC) was created under the Justice and Peace Law. It has representatives of victims' organizations and civil society groups engaged in peacebuilding activities, as well as senior government officials. The law empowers NRRC members to review the re-entry of ex-combatants into ordinary life, assess

the work done by local and national authorities to ensure full demobilization of illegal armed groups, evaluate the reparation and restitution to the victims, ensure the participation of victims in the process of judicial clarification and the full exercise of their rights, and recommend the criteria for reparations.

At the seminars, Burton and Randerá spoke about the origins and the internal proceedings of the TRC, explored how its challenges and constraints were overcome, and highlighted the importance of ensuring that victims' dignity, right to truth, social justice and reparation were met at all times. Seminar participants heard from national experts, including Sister Alba Stella Barreto, Diana Britto and Elmer Montaña of the 'Cali group', who presented the results of an AA-led project using restorative justice in the city's Aguablanca district to decrease violence, resolve conflict and achieve social justice in one of the poorest and most violent areas of the city.

## National experts

The seminar national experts also included Dr Angelika Rettberg, a professor of political science at Los Andes University, who addressed the issues influencing and affecting peacebuilding endeavours; Rafael Nieto, former vice-minister of justice, who referred to the arguments in favour and against the

Justice and Peace Law; and Julio Andres Sampedro, a lawyer and chief of the Victimology Department at Javeriana University, who impressed the audience by using works of art to analyse justice from the victim's perspective.

Peacebuilding priority: Fundación AlvarAlice is working directly and through others to achieve social justice for the millions of victims of violence, such as this group meeting in the city of Cali in 2007.





Burton and Randerá then attended a private meeting to discuss their TRC work with a selected group of newly appointed prosecutors and justice and peace judges, who lead investigations of crimes committed by members of illegally armed groups and are significant guarantors for victims to receive fair treatment during the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process of ex-combatants.

## Examples of indigenous peace action

Since victim reparation is a critical aspect in determining the success of any peace process, AA organized a fourth closed-door seminar in early 2006 in Bogotá. The keynote speaker was reparation expert Dr Alexander Segovia, and eight indigenous community groups presented their work on peacebuilding, communitarian reparations, social justice and development programmes. Some of the groups were also responsible for reintegration programmes, and explained the achievements and challenges of working with victims and ex-combatants at a time when two guerrilla groups remain active yet the paramilitaries have begun a post-conflict peacebuilding phase.

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### Indigenous group presentations

The eight indigenous community groups that presented their work to the fourth AA seminar were: Corporación Desarrollo y la Paz del Magdalena Medio, Fundación Red Desarrollo y Paz de los Montes de María, Corporación Desarrollo y Paz del Piedemonte Llanero, Corporación Vallenpaz, Fundación

AlvarAlice, Fundación Paz y Bien, Fundación Corona and Universidad Javeriana Cali, Corporación Prodepaz, Alcaldía de Medellín, Corporación Arco Iris, and Programa de Reinserción y Reconciliación del Distrito Capital.

Based on his research and experience, Dr Segovia recommended that reparation programmes:

- have very specific objectives and do not pretend to solve social and economic structural problems;
- focus on repairing and dignifying victims, and do not transform into development programmes, although they can complement one another, or be considered as mechanisms to end poverty;
- improve their outreach with collective and individual measures, as well as material and symbolic components, so they do not fall short or create false expectations among victims;
- are not replaced by a truth or full disclosure agreement. They are separate and do not exclude one another.

After listening to the indigenous groups' presentations, Dr Segovia suggested that Colombia has institutional capacity well beyond that of other countries in a similar situation, and said that the impressive human capital in the work of such groups would ultimately facilitate and complement the reparation processes that the NRRC will have to undertake across the country.

## Fast-track option for victims

The workshops allowed policymakers, politicians, public officials and other important figures from Colombia to interact with indigenous organizations and national and international experts on key peacebuilding and social justice issues. Other positive consequences included much-needed visibility and nationwide recognition for the work of the indigenous groups, and a decision by the vice-president's office to hire Dr Segovia as an external adviser for the NRRC. Dr Segovia has since been responsible for designing the government's reparation plan, which was launched under Decree 1290 in 2008 and has given victims the choice of an administrative or judicial reparation. An administrative reparation is a fast-track approach that allows victims to receive individual reparation in the form of a monetary payment or a housing subsidy and access to educational and health programmes, within a fixed period of time. The administrative reparation programme is expected to cost 7–10 trillion pesos (US\$3.5–5 billion) in the next five to ten years.

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## From violation to justice

The NRRC considers reparations as part of the process of transitional justice, including the need for truth, reconstruction of the historical memory, implementation of justice and institutional reforms. Reflecting national and international perspectives, the commission is concerned with restoration of the victim to the situation that existed before the violation, compensation, rehabilitation – such as care and professional assistance to the victims to re-establish them legally, physically and morally – and guarantees of non-repetition, which includes measures to avoid victims becoming vulnerable again and being subjected to violations of their human rights.

The commission is also concerned with the necessary balance that must exist between material reparations and symbolic ones, as well as between individual and collective reparations. These terms refer to the different forms a victim reparation programme may adopt. An example of an individual reparations programme with material components is the one currently being applied by the Colombian

government through which individual victims of the country's conflict receive a lump sum of US\$9,000 as an indemnity for any severe harm, such as loss of a family member, or physical or mental disability, caused by the criminal activities of illegal armed groups.

A collective reparations programme involves a series of measures directed to benefit a collective group or a community considered to have been victimized by the continued criminal action of illegal armed groups. The reparation measures can include social and economic interventions to improve public services, such as health, education, safe water, sanitation and housing. Symbolic reparations refer to measures directed to dignify victims of the conflict, many of them innocent people killed by illegal armed groups that claimed the victims were guerrilla fighters or collaborators. The processes of documenting and unveiling the truth or historical memory and the enactment of memorial monuments, or the assignment of public places with the victims' names, fall within this category of symbolic reparation measures.

This is a clear example of how AA, with a small grant, influenced Colombian public policy in favour of victims, peacebuilding and social justice. Burton and Randerer highlighted one TRC fault, saying it had no way to ensure victims were given reparations within a reasonable time, so that some had received little or nothing despite waiting years while offenders enjoyed freedom thanks to the full disclosure



agreement. With the help of Dr Segovia and the NRRC, Colombia has learned from South Africa, and the government has enacted various decrees to facilitate victims' access to reparation programmes, contributing to the achievement of overall peace and social justice.

The workshops proved a highly effective means of influencing key actors by bringing together a small and carefully selected audience with fieldwork experience and direct influence on the decision-making process. This facilitated active participation and open discussions with the guidance of renowned international experts. Participant evaluations showed that the workshops' audience achieved a better understanding of the main aspects of the Justice and Peace Law, and clarified the meaning and implications of concepts such as peacebuilding, reconciliation, social justice, reparation and truth, in part due to the quality of the speakers and the agenda's relevance.

## Diplomacy to shift perceptions

Track two or citizens' diplomacy is normally carried out by intermediate leaders or influential elites (not combatants) with the capacity to influence another sector in society through low-profile, non-judgemental and extra-official meetings that aim to develop mutual understanding and generate new ideas through changes in personal perceptions. AA has adopted track two diplomacy twice as an efficient way to influence different actors, including the Colombian government.

Concept papers offered one form of track two diplomacy by bringing independent expert opinions and perspectives to problematic issues. The paper on the UN's role in the Colombian conflict aimed to provide the president's office and the foreign ministry with a well-documented analysis at a time when there were regular government complaints regarding the 'biased' position of UN representatives in Colombia. It was claimed that they appeared eager to condemn the armed forces' violations of human rights while overlooking mass atrocities committed by illegal armed groups.

AA asked Dr Louise Fawcett, fellow in politics from the UK's St Catherine's College, Oxford, to write the paper. Her document, 'The United Nations and peacemaking in Colombia: rights, wrongs and the future', was presented to Colombia's ambassador to France and subsequently forwarded to top government officials, including the Colombian ambassador to the UN. Coincidentally, a few weeks after the paper had reached top government officials and UN personnel, there was a change in the tone of the dialogue between the government and UN officials based in Colombia. A second concept paper, on the origin, principles and uses of the concept 'Reasons of state', was commissioned from an academic of the Sorbonne University in Paris. It aimed to raise the awareness of key officials as to the actual meaning and potential impact of the concept, which was being used as the central argument for the government's decisions on the release of some guerrilla prisoners.

## The search for workable solutions

'The Colombian conflict has been of increasing international concern since the late 1990s. Its spill-over effects of violence, drugs and crime have had important consequences for regional and global security, and its illegal armed groups have been labelled terrorist. The involvement of the UN secretary general dates from 1999 when a special adviser was appointed to assist in the search for a negotiated solution. Yet attempts by the international community to broker a settlement failed and Colombia remains an insecure and unstable country despite continuing efforts by recently re-elected president

Alvaro Uribe to combat violence and crime. Why has the internationalization of the conflict and peace process not yielded a more positive outcome? What are the lessons of UN engagement in Colombia for the promotion of international security? This article critically assesses the role of the UN alongside other international actors and suggests that failure to appreciate the changing nature of the conflict and of the Colombian state have hampered the search for workable solutions.'

*Extract from: The United Nations and Peacemaking in Colombia: Rights, wrongs and the future*

In another opportunity for track two diplomacy, AA invited Colombia's vice-president to South Africa on an unofficial visit to meet the South African president and vice-president, key members of the TRC, and businessmen who played a decisive role in the peace process and creating the country's new democratic institutions. The visit was considered a success because, as an unintended effect, the Colombian government decided that the vice-president should not chair the NRRC and appointed Eduardo Pizarro, a civil society university professor and victims' representative, as commission president, as had happened in South Africa's TRC.

To further contribute to peacebuilding in Colombia, AA presented a proposal to OSI to help the government address the urgent and serious issue of reaching a humanitarian agreement on prisoner exchange with both the FARC and the ELN. In alliance with Cali's Javeriana University and the regional government of the Cauca Valley State, AA worked intensively to create awareness of the benefits of a humanitarian agreement and promote favourable public opinion towards the idea. AA convened a meeting of well-known experts on humanitarian issues, some of them with experience of prisoner exchanges, in Paris in early 2007.

## Paris participants

The humanitarian experts consulted at the Paris meeting were: Shlomo Ben Ami, from the Centro Toledo por la Paz; Aldo Civico, International Center for Conflict Resolution, Columbia University, and member of the Focolare Community; Riccardo Cannelli and Gianni la Bella, Saint's Egidio Community; Alvaro Leyva, prisoner exchange facilitator working with

the Colombian government and the FARC; Eduardo Pizarro, NRRC president; Patricia Perdomo, NRRC member; Antonio de Roux, vice-president of Universidad Javeriana Cali; Nicanor Restrepo, a respected businessmen; and Oscar Rojas, AA's executive director.

As a result of the meeting, AA and the Centro Toledo por la Paz drafted a working paper, 'Road map for a humanitarian agreement in Colombia'.<sup>2</sup> The working paper explained the importance of a humanitarian agreement, and presented in a balanced way the arguments in favour and against a prisoner exchange process between the FARC and the government within a demilitarized 'encounter zone' in the Cauca Valley State in Pradera and Florida. The paper was distributed to top government officials, such as the minister of interior and justice, and to president Alvaro Uribe through his main adviser. Another copy was handed to Rodrigo Granda, a leading FARC member, in Bogotá when he was released from jail.

<sup>2</sup> *Hoja de Ruta para un Acuerdo Humanitario en Colombia (Road Map for a Humanitarian Agreement in Colombia)* (April 2007) Madrid, CTIPax.

## Conclusion

From its roots locally in Cali, where it had been working with indigenous organizations to foster social justice and peaceful resolution of conflicts through the application of restorative principles, AA has widened the scope of its peacebuilding to Bogotá, the administrative and political centre of the country. Following its symposium, the capacity building workshops not only reinforced AA's leadership and capacity to bring together leading figures, they were also an important opportunity for legislators, members of the Colombian judiciary, senior public officials and indigenous organizations to learn from renowned national and international experts. The latter were a key factor in the workshops' success, because their political and fieldwork experience meant they knew about victims' needs and the main obstacles, and could offer practical solutions to common problems.

AA learned that indigenous organizations, when given the funds, can put to work non-monetary resources, such as their network of contacts, their convening capacity and their leadership, to organize high-impact capacity building workshops and track two diplomatic initiatives by using quiet strategies to enable progress to be made, whether helping improve the tone of relations between the UN and the Colombian government or producing a road map to a humanitarian agreement so the government and the guerrillas could meet to negotiate the release of prisoners.

All the funds donated by the Tinker Foundation and OSI had as their ultimate beneficiaries the victims of Colombia's armed conflict, who will benefit from a more equitable reparation process, access to an NRRC with a president representing civil society and victims rather than the government, and a more favourable environment for the UN to offer assistance. These examples of 'small money, big impact' projects, led by Fundación AlvarAlice, illustrate how an indigenous foundation can contribute to the achievement of social justice and long-lasting peace.

AA is convinced that peacebuilding is closely linked to social justice. It is a process that begins before a conflict has ended and it should involve all parties as its greatest impact for sustained peace is when society's various sectors work together to find a solution to a common problem. In a serious peacebuilding process, it is of vital importance to try to reach the highest possible level of social justice through the implementation of adequate measures in reparation, reintegration, education, income generation and healthcare if reconciliation and long-lasting peace are to be achieved.

## Case Study 3 Working with political ex-prisoners in Northern Ireland

### Sensitive to time and nuance

The Community Foundation for Northern Ireland's (CFNI) work with political ex-prisoners/ex-combatants brings into focus the fact that the role of an independent charitable funder can be incredibly important in societies that are in transition from violent conflict, in addition to challenging more general issues of social injustice. This case study holds that 'indigenous funders can be sensitive to the importance of time and nuance'. Very often in peacebuilding, a small grant or a non-financial initiative at the

right moment can create space for progress, while large bureaucratic programmes – however well intentioned – are not flexible or fleet enough to respond to the immediate need or opportunity. Local funders can provide the research and development of peacebuilding and identify the infrastructure around which international funders and development experts can construct their larger programmes. Such an equitable partnership offers a positive synergy.

Confrontation: the noise and urgency created by army patrols and house searches, bombing and gunfire, 'makes the examination of structural causes of social injustice seem at best far-fetched, and at worst treacherous'.



## Community Foundation for Northern Ireland

As the Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust from 1979 and under its present name since 2000, CFNI has been working to support people, strengthen communities and build peace, with its mission of driving social change by tackling the social exclusion, poverty and social injustice in a divided society through funding and supporting community-based action and by influencing policy development. In addition to its

other funding programmes, CFNI's work with political ex-prisoners has seen £5 million (just over US\$8 million) provided to 61 projects to assist thousands of people over a 12-year period.

### For more information

[www.communityfoundationni.org](http://www.communityfoundationni.org)

'Theories of social justice help to identify and classify different aspects of a person's life with which we should be concerned: the extent to which their basic needs are met, the resources available to them relative to others, their negative and positive freedoms, their status and the degree of recognition that they receive, to name but a few. Different dimensions of justice are interconnected. Justice considered in terms of distribution and recognition; recognition and voice, and justice in public and private spheres.'<sup>1</sup>

Conflict becomes a feasible response and violent conflict an option when the diverse and interconnected dimensions of social justice become clustered as mutually reinforcing injustices. Whatever the different community narratives about the nature of the 'Troubles' (the colloquial term for Northern Ireland's violent political conflict), the perception of social injustice by a sizeable minority of the population fuelled both a mistrust of the state and a search for reform and, eventually, constitutional alternatives. Alongside the sense of alienation experienced by the Nationalist/Republican community was a growth in violent conflict between a range of Republican paramilitary organizations and the British Army and Royal Ulster Constabulary police force, and both within and between Republican and Loyalist communities. Despite extensive intercommunal violence, in local community terms this was more often posited as 'defence'.

The consequences of the 30 years of violent conflict can be counted in terms of more than 3,660 lives lost, at least 40,400 injured and an estimated 25,000–30,000 people having served prison sentences for politically motivated offences, in a population of about 1.6 million people. It has been estimated that half the population were closely associated with someone killed or injured, with the impact of the violence concentrated in relatively disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods and the rural border areas along the division from the Republic of Ireland. The coinciding factors of multiple deprivation – poor housing, unemployment, lack of social mobility – and experience of violent conflict are important in terms of linkages between peacebuilding and social justice, but activist involvement in political violence cannot be seen in reductionist terms. The politics of recognition and voice were as important as the politics of material deprivation.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gary Craig, Tania Burchardt and David Gordon (eds) (2008) *Social Justice and Public Policy: Seeking fairness in diverse societies* Bristol, Policy Press. (p12)

<sup>2</sup> See Will Kymlicka (2008) *Multiculturalism, Social Justice and the Welfare State*, in Gary Craig, Tania Burchardt and David Gordon (eds) – op cit. (pp 53–75)

## The politics of numbers

There is a difficulty in presenting specific figures for the numbers convicted and jailed for politically motivated offences during the Troubles as the direct-rule British government of the time claimed that figures were not kept in those terms. The government meta-narrative of the conflict was represented

by the mantra that pertained from 1976 to 1996: 'Normalization, criminalization and Ulsterization', ie that the conflict was an aggravated crime wave experienced in an otherwise normal democracy and should be dealt with locally.

Within the context of Northern Ireland's contested society, CFNI was acutely aware that perceived injustices were in part contributing to the violence. There was also the concern that the pervasive predominance of the Nationalist/Republican and Unionist/Loyalist intercommunal divide would silence and render invisible other identities in terms of both government policies and community narratives. During 1979–94, CFNI – through its grantmaking and related practice-to-policy, added-value approach – invested in thematic areas such as the women's sector and socially excluded, marginalized groups. It also supported the development of 'voice' at local level through investment in community arts and cultural initiatives, as well as funding local self-help regeneration programmes. However, it was to be the Republican and Loyalist ceasefires of 1994 that allowed the space for CFNI to more overtly relate the twin objectives of social justice and peacebuilding.

## Making changes to find peace

CFNI believed an effective peacebuilding strategy had to include:

- tangible changes in people's lives, from less fear, more trust and feelings of community self-worth and acceptance, to improved social, economic and environmental conditions;
- developing an understanding of how the conflict affected others, both individuals and communities;
- building a more open and pluralist society, characterized by inclusive and participative governance, with the confidence to engage with the politics of recognition and identity.

This was a challenging agenda for a society that was still sharply divided and suspicious of the implications of change. Despite the conclusion of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement (and the early release of political prisoners), Northern Ireland's macro-political settlement was still tentative, with an increasing tendency for political ex-prisoners to be seen as a convenient scapegoat. CFNI believed that an effective approach to peacebuilding required the active involvement of those central to the conflict, and that the demands of social justice emphasized the inclusion of a group in danger of marginalization, particularly within the Unionist/Loyalist communities.

## Willing to die, willing to work

'Did they think that we came down from the mountains at night and went back up in the morning? Where did they think that we came from? We've argued over the

years, if you're willing to go to prison or die for your community, then you should be willing to work for it.'

*Political ex-prisoner, April 2006*

CFNI provided grants to two community-based centres working to reintegrate released ex-prisoners in 1994. These centres – Tar Anall for Republican ex-prisoners and EPIC for Loyalist ex-prisoners – were developed through initial work undertaken within the Maze prison by members of the Society of Friends (Quakers), who had long provided support services to political prisoners. CFNI gained the financial resources to extend the work of the centres during 1995–9 through the EU Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation, which had been introduced to underpin the peace process. In 1995, investing the foundation's reputational capital in the process of inclusion, CFNI convened a meeting with the ex-prisoner departments of the full range of paramilitary groups and organizations with a specialist understanding of the issues, to consult them about the most effective disbursement of funding. By January 1996, a political ex-prisoners' grants advisory committee was set up within CFNI, with representatives of all paramilitary groups (two Loyalist, three Republican) and other interested individuals. In effect, the committee served four purposes:

- building trust between the ex-prisoner groups, CFNI and other organizations within society;
- creating a forum where ex-prisoner groups, who had previously engaged in violent conflict with each other, could meet and discuss common issues;
- placing a potentially marginalized group at the centre of decision-making about the allocation of resources and the influencing of policy;
- providing the context in which cross-community relationships could be established and informal conversations held.

Over the period of the EU special support programme, some £5 million was awarded to 61 groups composed of, and working with, political ex-prisoners and their families. This included projects inside the Maze prison, where prisoners were still serving their sentences prior to the early release scheme in 1998–9. During this work, CFNI commissioned three external evaluations and organized other development activities to help build positive relationships across the diverse range of political opinion. Conferences and seminars were held and a study visit was arranged in 1997 to Belgium, which attracted questioning by British police during the group's transit through Heathrow airport (when one Loyalist group member insisted on speaking Gaelic, which he had learned in prison). Ex-prisoners from the Provisional IRA, Ulster Defence Association, Official IRA and Ulster Volunteer Force visited a notorious German wartime prison camp and then heard from an academic at Leuven University about how Belgium had moved from wartime trauma to signing the Treaty of Rome that established the EU. In an intense engagement, members of the group were challenged about their political perspectives and their commitment to the peace process by European Commission officials and ambassadors from Denmark, Germany, Italy, Greece, France, Belgium and South Africa.



## Grantmaking across the community divides

In 1995–2000, CFNI awarded about 5,600 grants, including funds for those groups working with victims/survivors of the Troubles, across the various community divides in Northern Ireland. For its projects with prisoners still serving their sentences inside the

Maze prison, this involved a CFNI community project officer going into the prison to discuss the project applications with the educational officers of the various political groups.

This investment in additional work grew over subsequent years, with CFNI organizing a series of peacebuilding gatherings in conjunction with Harvard University's Project on 'justice in times of transition'. The political ex-prisoner groups, alongside the full range of community-based activists with which CFNI was working, heard guest presenters from El Salvador, South Africa, the Middle East and many other divided societies describing their peacebuilding experiences. In one such gathering of Loyalist and Republican ex-prisoners, South Africa's Justice Albie Sachs explained how he had been both a victim and a combatant, but went on to help fashion a new country. This international validation for the active participation of political ex-prisoners in peacebuilding was particularly important given attacks on this grouping by both politicians and parts of the media. Emerging from conflict there is often a tendency to look for a group to blame rather than making an honest appraisal of possible structural causes that contributed to the violence.

Over 2000–08, CFNI continued to support initiatives by political ex-prisoners, and their representatives still meet every three months in the CFNI offices to discuss topics of common interest, from the impact of legal restrictions imposed on ex-prisoners to the challenge of the high walls, known as peacelines, erected in areas of tension to keep communities from attacking each other. These issues include the need to relay their experience in ways that discourage young people from involvement in conflict, the nature of their contribution in rebuilding their communities, and the sensitive and difficult issue of how to engage with the legacy of the past. Working with other civil society organizations, CFNI has also been part of a working group on the reintegration of political ex-prisoners, chaired by the head of the Northern Ireland civil service. However, elected politicians are still nervous about or oppose the mainstreaming of financial support for this work, leaving CFNI dependent on independent charitable sources of funding, as well as the EU, to meet these needs until 2011.

## Creating space and avoiding blame

If this work with political ex-prisoners can be taken as a case study of the relationship between peacebuilding and social justice, a number of important features can be identified:



New agenda: in 1994, the Republican and Loyalist ceasefires allowed the space for the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland to overtly relate the twin objectives of social justice and peacebuilding.



- The need to create space for the voices of those who may be seen as experiencing social injustice. Their perceptions are their reality, but their narrative can often remain silenced and marginalized, being seen as falling outside society's 'commonsense' understandings.
- The need to re-frame issues so that the exercise and experience of social injustice cannot be blamed on excluded or marginalized groups. The emphasis on difference, self-exclusion from the norm or being somehow unacceptable to society is often put forward as a rational explanation for differences in treatment.
- The need to explicitly recognize group difference and either 'compensate for disadvantage, revalue some attributes, positions or actions, or take special steps to meet needs and empower members of disadvantaged groups'.<sup>3</sup>
- The need to examine causes of social injustice in the broader context of societal structures and historical experience rather than simply focusing on the consequences of that injustice as experienced by the excluded group.

From the experience of Northern Ireland, sidelining different voices and the failure of democratic practice to address issues of perceived injustice over many decades provided fertile ground for violence and alienation. The demonization of those who articulate a perception of injustice invariably fuelled the resort to violence, as did the governmental simplification of comparing the moderate mass to 'the terrorists'. In addition, there were the practical difficulties caused by soldiers policing civilian areas, which transformed 'our boys' into 'oppressors' very quickly and easily. The daily grind of army patrols, house searches, and low-flying military helicopters – paralleled by bombing and gunfire – can create an urgency and a din which makes the examination of structural causes of social injustice seem at best far-fetched, and at worst treacherous.

<sup>3</sup> Iris Marion Young (2008) 'Structural Injustice and the Politics of Difference', in Gary Craig, Tania Burchardt and David Gordon (eds) (2008) op cit. (p81)

## Challenging the monolith

The response of state violence, and a government narrative that solely blamed 'the minority of extremists', led one community activist in the Nationalist/Republican community of West Belfast, interviewed in February 2006, to conclude: 'I just could not believe what I was seeing in front of me. Just the viciousness of the system and how powerful they are. And you know the whole paraphernalia of the

tanks, the weapons, the uniforms, all of that there; the structures, the jails, the courts, just the huge monolith that is that power. I always just felt that that had to be challenged. And at the end of the day, our people were good people; they weren't bad people, they were good, decent people, and we didn't deserve it, and it was completely wrong and unjust. I'm not taking away from the wrong things we did as a community, too . . .'

Social justice, particularly redistributive social justice, has often been associated with Marshall's 'social rights of citizenship',<sup>4</sup> and while social justice theorists have both disputed and elaborated on this interpretation, it is a clear issue for social justice in the context of peacebuilding, where the very nature of citizenship is contested. Violence can shift the core emphasis to the often narrower concern with aspects of civil liberties and human rights, despite Rawls' (1971) linkage of 'social primary goods – liberty and opportunity, income and wealth, and the social basis of self-respect'.<sup>5</sup>

## How local funders add value

The potential role of an indigenous, local independent charitable funder can be incredibly important in societies experiencing conflict in addition to the challenges of social injustice that affect all societies. In a study of CFNI's work with political ex-prisoners,<sup>6</sup> Leat has articulated a number of these roles, including:

- convening, by bringing groups together across the sectarian divide while being conscious of the difficulties, sensitivities and importance of timing that this would entail;
- using a variety of resources to work on different levels simultaneously; applying a combination of grantmaking, reputational capital, organizational capacity building, influencing policy, and building personal and organizational relations on a broad base;
- building legitimacy and recruiting champions from broader society to focus on the issues of peacebuilding and perceived injustices by using the foundation's reputation and position;
- building international networks and bringing speakers to move things on by allowing people who could not be fitted into locally constructed narrow divisions to say challenging things;
- recording progress and obstacles and setting benchmarks for policy change and the progressive empowerment of excluded groups, and being in frequent contact with all relevant parties to understand the political and practical realities associated with the challenge of change.

Peacebuilding requires persistence, pragmatism and passion, which together understand that progressive change is not linear and that emergence from violent

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Marshall (1950) *Citizenship and Social Class and Other Essays* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

<sup>5</sup> John Rawls (1971) *A Theory of Justice* Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press. (p303)

<sup>6</sup> Diana Leat (2007) *Just Change: Strategies for increasing philanthropic impact* London, Association of Charitable Foundations. (pp116–32)

conflict is neither pure nor without contradictions. To engage effectively, the local foundation needs to hold a position and an ethos that enables it to engage with many stakeholders, including those seen as outside the acceptable norm. Engagement does not mean agreement, but it implies a recognition of the need to ventilate (if not in all cases to validate) voice and grievance.

Indigenous funders can be sensitive to the importance of time and nuance. In situations requiring peacebuilding, a small grant or a non-financial initiative at the right point in time can often create space for progress, whereas big bureaucratic programmes – no matter how well-meaning – do not have the necessary flexibility or fleetness to be able to respond to the immediate requirement. Local funders can provide the research and development of peacebuilding, but they can also identify the scaffolding around which international funders and development experts can construct their larger-scale programmes. There can be a positive synergy between the two approaches.

However, it is not always comfortable or easy to work on the related areas of peacebuilding and social justice in divided and contested societies. Indigenous funders bear all the pressures associated with working over the long term in tense and often dangerous circumstances. While creating space for others, they can also need the space to share ideas, exchange experiences and seek support. As noted in *Why a Foundations for Peace Network?*,<sup>7</sup> building peace can take as long and as much imagination and investment as it took to wage war, while raising issues of social injustice during the process of peacebuilding can be equally controversial and difficult. If persistence and pragmatism in addressing such challenges are necessary, it is the passion of indigenous funders that is the determining factor in their contribution. This passion recognizes that while philanthropy must be seen to be fair, it can never be neutral.

<sup>7</sup> *Why a Foundations for Peace Network? Reflections for discussion* (2006) Belfast, Foundations for Peace.

## Case Study 4 Police-Arab initiatives in Israel

### Fostering cooperation and equitable policing

The case study from The Abraham Fund Initiatives describes a strategy for improving relationships between the police and the Arab community in Israel, by helping the police adopt and implement a more culturally sensitive and equitable approach towards Israel's Arab citizens. By working to transform the culture of Israel's police, TAFI aims to enhance the scope and quality of services delivered to Arab citizens, while working simultaneously with the Arab

communities themselves to define their needs and expectations from the police, enabling Arab citizens to approach the police and have their needs met and rights respected. Changing old attitudes and building relationships of trust will foster cooperation between the police and local Arab leaders that will help them more effectively handle conflict and ensure all citizens receive an equitable policing service.

Multi-ethnic messages: as part of TAFI's efforts to transform the culture of the police force to benefit all citizens, Arab and Jewish, Dr Thabet abu Ras conducts a seminar on the reality of Israeli Arab life for officers of the Israeli border police.



## The Abraham Fund Initiatives

The Abraham Fund Initiatives (TAFI) was established in 1989 to work with both the Arab and the Jewish citizens of Israel. Named after the common ancestor of both Jews and Arabs, TAFI is dedicated to tearing down walls of ignorance, prejudice, fear and misunderstanding. It works to advance coexistence, equality and cooperation through large-scale initiatives, strategic grassroots projects and public

education and advocacy that promote its vision of shared citizenship and opportunity for all of Israel's citizens. The work described in this case study cost US\$60,000, with US\$20,000 from the British Council and Israeli police, while TAFI provided the remainder.

**For more information**  
[www.abrahamfund.org](http://www.abrahamfund.org)

Despite its democratic political system, Israel's obligation to protect the rights of its minorities and to treat all citizens equally, regardless of their religious, ethnic or national affiliation, often falls short of its professed ideals. Arab citizens comprise nearly 20 per cent of Israel's population, yet they are constantly underserved in budget and land allocation, access to government services, employment opportunities and education. Relations between the Arab community and the Israeli police have always been a point of heightened tension; the widespread view of Arabs in Israel as a potential 'fifth column' have often allowed the police to disregard Arab citizens' civil and human rights in the name of security. Tension between the police and the Arab community reached a critical point in October 2000, when the Israeli police fired on Arab demonstrators, resulting in 12 civilian deaths.

These events highlighted the growing inequality, marginalization and exclusion experienced by Arabs in Israel, and pointed out fundamental flaws in the attitude and behaviour of the Israeli police towards Arab citizens. Moreover, they demonstrated that unless the underlying causes of conflict are confronted head on, Israel will be fated to suffer the deterioration and destabilization of its society. There is no better illustration of the link between social justice and peacebuilding in Israel than the fact that unless Israel's Arab citizens feel that they have a stake in the country in which they live, that their language and culture are respected and that they are regarded as equal citizens in the fullest sense of the word, the result will be increasing alienation, separatism and radicalization of Israel's Arab community, escalating tensions and potentially violent internal conflict.

## Inequality highlighted by inquiry

In 2001, the Israeli government established a state commission of inquiry to investigate the causes of the October 2000 events, headed by retired Supreme Court justice Theodor Orr. What became known as the Orr Commission addressed the role that discrimination and inequality played in feeding Palestinian/Arab frustrations. The commission report stated that the riots were unprecedented and could have developed into a serious conflict between the two communities, especially as there were retaliatory Jewish riots in some locations, adding that the events, their unusual character and serious results were the consequence of deep-seated factors that

created an explosive situation in Israel's Arab population. The report concluded that the Israeli state and a series of governments failed to comprehensively tackle the serious problems created by the existence of a large Arab minority inside the Jewish state.

The report said that government handling of the Arab sector had been neglectful and discriminatory, did not show sufficient sensitivity to the needs of the Arab population, and did not allocate state resources in an equal manner. The state did not do enough or try hard enough to create equality for its Arab citizens or to uproot discriminatory or unjust phenomena. Meanwhile, not enough was done to enforce the law in the Arab sector. A fundamental contribution to the riots was the serious distress that prevailed in the Arab sector because of poverty, unemployment, a shortage of land, problems in the education system and a substantially defective infrastructure.

## Unprepared and ill-equipped for unrest

Various events during 2000 stridently signalled that the potential for trouble was becoming a reality, according to the Orr report. Although the police understood this possibility and took steps to address it, its commanders and politicians failed to make suitable preparations for the outbreak of widespread rioting, and in not addressing the tactical and strategic aspects involved. The failure was evident in a lack of clear policy in handling the events during the critical first two days. The police did not have sufficient operational or psychological training for any disturbances, especially for events of the sort that occurred, and lacked appropriate police riot gear. The problem of equipment was evident in the police reliance on a very problematic means of rubber bullets – rubber-coated cylinders that generally contained three separate bullets – whose dangers were not sufficiently communicated to those using them or those deciding to use them as a central and sometimes sole tool for riot control. Not enough was done to avoid bodily injury to citizens, including those rioting.

The report highlighted a series of deeds and omissions before and during the events that combined to fuel the explosive potential. A visit by the then opposition leader Ariel Sharon to the Temple Mount led to serious responses from the Arab sector leadership inside Israel and from the Palestinian leadership in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. One day later, there was significant unrest at the site, and during its dispersal by the police, some protestors died and many were injured. Serious riots then began in Judea and Samaria, in which a number of residents were killed and many more injured. The Higher Arab Monitoring Committee chose at this point to call for street processions and demonstrations by Arabs. Given that the police and politicians had warning of unrest and its likely locations before the riots began, the Orr report found that they had failed to be sufficiently prepared.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Orr Commission report's official summary is available at: [www.haaretz.com/hasen/pages/ShArt.jhtml?itemNo=335594](http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/pages/ShArt.jhtml?itemNo=335594)

## Adopting a culturally sensitive approach

The report called for improvements in the police service to the Arab sector, and criticized factors in the force's structure, leadership and training that were undermining the democratic principles of Israel and social justice for Arab citizens. The police, recognizing their lack of capacity to implement these changes, and TAFI, as a leading expert in the field of Jewish-Arab relations, began a dialogue to explore how TAFI could assist the police in healing their relationship with the Arab community in Israel, by helping the police adopt and implement a culturally sensitive and equitable approach towards Israel's Arab citizens.

TAFI rose to this challenge and in 2002 formed the police-Arab community initiative. Initial hesitation and apprehension by the police towards the cultural diversity training, Arabic language courses and joint programmes with the Arab community introduced by TAFI, gradually gave way to increased cooperation and an understanding that every police staff member must be properly trained to provide equitable and culturally sensitive services to the Arab community in Israel. In light of this understanding, the Israeli police have formally recognized TAFI as their official NGO partner for educational activities on democracy, civil rights, equality and multiculturalism, and instituted the police-community initiative as part of the formal activities of their human resources department.

## Transforming the police-Arab relationship

The overall objective of the community initiative is to promote democracy, social justice and the protection of human rights in Israel by transforming the relationship between the Israeli police and the Arab communities they serve from one of hostility and antagonism to one in which the two groups can work productively together to prevent conflict, combat crime and social ills, and create positive relations between Arab citizens and representatives of the state. By sensitizing the police to the needs of the Arab community, and opening channels of dialogue between the police and Arab community representatives, TAFI aims to enable Arab citizens to approach the police and have their needs met and rights respected. Improving relations will not only prevent conflict between the Arab community and police officers but also improve law and order in Arab communities, through cooperation to solve crimes, such as drug dealing and vandalism, and attention to problems previously ignored as 'internal community matters', such as domestic violence or honour killings.

The police-Arab community initiative works on three simultaneous tracks:

- with elected and lay Arab leadership, strengthening the Arab community and its ability to voice its needs to the police;
- creating a culture of human rights, democracy and multiculturalism/multinationalism within the Israeli police system;
- joint activities by police and Arab community representatives to open channels of dialogue and provide transparency and accountability to the police.

Activities in the first few years of the initiative primarily targeted individual stations or district commanders. Due to the high turnover within the police, it was realized that for changes to be sustainable and make their way into the formal police operational

policy, principles of policing with the community must permeate police training and leadership. TAFI formed a partnership with the Israeli police senior officers training academy, which paved the way for conducting an educational programme on policing in multi-ethnic societies. The programme was carried out for the first time in mid-2008 as part of a six-week 'senior management and command' course, the most senior training course in the Israeli police. The course participants were 18 police officers with the rank of commander, all Jewish, who were responsible for managing police districts, or departments of the police national headquarters.

## Building on the Belfast experience

Within the framework of the overall course, TAFI's learning module on 'policing in a multicultural/multinational society' had six segments:

- Democracy and multiculturalism
- Arab society in Israel
- Policing in a multi-ethnic society
- Police-Arab society relations
- Comparative study of the Northern Ireland policing model
- Submitting course assignments and recommendations to the police commissioner

The first four segments took place in the Neurim Academy, the Israeli police training course centre near the city of Netanya, and lasted two and a half days. Participants met with experts from the field and from academia, Jews and Arabs, and with representatives of the Arab leadership. The pedagogic methods used were diverse, including lectures, workshops, open discussions, educational films, and preparation of comprehensive reading material. With background material on the conflict in Northern Ireland, the fifth segment was a five-day study mission to Belfast, including visits to police headquarters, its training centre, and a local police station in a sensitive district. The Israeli police held discussions with counterparts in the Northern Ireland police and with members of parliament from a wide range of the political parties to learn first-hand about the transformation that the police service for Northern Ireland has undergone. The sixth segment took place back at the Neurim Academy, with the participants completing their course assignment, which was to write a work plan for policing in each geographic division of the Arab population, based upon the principles of multi-ethnic policing.

## Recruitment for fair representation

The group also compiled a list of systemic recommendations, based upon their experiences from TAFI's learning module which, together with their course assignment, were subsequently presented to Israel's national police commissioner and can be seen as one of the indicators of the impact of this work. The main recommendations were to:

- establish a public advisory forum to the police, including members of the Arab leadership;
- constantly strengthen and maintain dialogue between the police and Arab society;



- form a team within the police to see the Orr Commission recommendations through to their implementation;
- increase and maintain a consistent police presence in Arab towns to create feelings of belonging and security;
- increase police relations with the Arab media;
- map the needs and attitudes of Arab citizens concerning the police to improve police operating methods;
- increase the number of Arab citizens who serve in the police until a fair representation is reached;
- initiate research that will advance the understanding of this issue;
- continue to assimilate the notion of policing in a multi-ethnic society within the organization, at all levels and within all police training.

TAFI's operational team for the work on police training consisted of Dr Guy Ben-Porat of Ben-Gurion University, TAFI police-Arab community initiative manager Michal Fox, and research coordinator Uri Gopher, who together planned and implemented the programme in consultation with TAFI's two co-executive directors in Israel, Mohammad Darawshe and Amnon Be'eri-Sulitzeanu. The team collaborated with three partners: the training and public relations department of the Israeli police, whose support enabled TAFI to introduce its educational model into the senior command training course; the British Council in Israel, which helped coordinate the education study tour to Belfast and supplied funding; and the Policing Service for Northern Ireland, which was formally contacted by the Israeli police and arranged the meetings and activities within Northern Ireland. The total cost of the police training project including travel was US\$60,000, approximately two-thirds of which was covered by TAFI, while the remaining cost was roughly evenly divided between the Israeli police and the British Council.

<sup>2</sup> In 2006–07, TAFI commissioned leading experts, including Dr Khaled Abu Asba, Said Tali, Riad Tibi, Michal Fox and Dr Guy Ben Porat, to conduct research on the needs and attitudes of the Arab citizens towards the police. The findings are being published and made public throughout 2009–10.

The methodology of the programme was diverse, based on TAFI's previous experiences working with the police, Arab and Jewish communities in Israel, the government and other establishment organizations, as well as best practice from the field and research from around the world. A number of decisions on methodology were based on research and mapping conducted for TAFI about the specific reality of Israel and the needs in particular towns.<sup>2</sup>

## Progress on the front line

Since the training course participants hold senior police positions, changes in their outlook and practice have the potential to lead to significant progress at all levels of policing, from front-line officers to the national police commissioner. The exposure to international models and the comparative study of the police in Northern Ireland enabled participants to learn directly about multicultural community policing around the world. This police-police connection and seeing that the recommended policies have been effectively implemented elsewhere are effective in persuading local police of the efficacy of the recommendations, and the likelihood of their success. In addition, it provides them the opportunity to ask professional questions regarding the implementation of policy changes. In a hierarchal organization, which is generally

considered as resistant to change, such methods prove efficient for passing on knowledge and information while engaging the participants in the process and working through the resistance that is sometimes encountered.

The implementation of the programme went according to plan, the participants expressed their appreciation for the careful planning, and, most importantly, there are a number of indicators that point to a lasting effect. As well as the participants' recommendations for policy changes within the police being examined by the national police commissioner, the participants initiated their own local and regional initiatives to promote trust building with the Arab community and have sought the help of TAFI in facilitating these processes.

While the people directly affected by the training course were the 18 police commanders, their experience has been filtering up and down to police at the national, regional and local levels. For example, one of the commanders, head of the Yiftah sub-district in Jaffa, the ethnically mixed town adjacent to Tel Aviv, has already initiated the establishment of an advisory public forum in his region, a step resulting directly from the understanding gained from the course. The commander involved the district commander and TAFI in the process. Others are in the process of taking similar steps.

An important aspect of TAFI's continued work with the police will be following up intensively on the recommendations, and helping to ensure that they are implemented in practice, including the establishment of the commissioner's forum involving the police commissioner, other senior police officers and national Arab leaders, to supervise the work of the police and direct changes according to needs in the Arab community. The fact that TAFI will continue to be permitted to introduce educational modules to police training will assist the pursuit of these goals.

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 Educational: practical steps help foster a culturally sensitive and equitable approach towards Israel's Arab citizens by the police, such as this visit by an officer to an Arab elementary school in Lod under the TAFI 'My Safe School' programme.



## Listening to community concerns

In the future, TAFI intends to increase the involvement of Arab leaders with its work with the police, especially through direct interaction with the senior police command. While TAFI was able to identify genuine interest among the participants to hold more such meetings, Arab leadership concerns need to be addressed. These include any community perceptions that they are collaborating with the police or being too lenient towards the police or even that the meetings might legitimize police actions, while there is concern among the Israeli police of being accused of all the wrongdoings that are perceived by the Arab community as part of their relations with the state.

The final potential beneficiaries of TAFI's work with the police and the Arab community are all the citizens of Israel, Arab and Jewish, as they will benefit from better police training, improved police services based on systematic needs assessment, and greater overall feelings of security based on greater trust and a reduction both in hostilities and in the perceived threat of 'the other'. In particular, the Arab citizens may benefit from improved channels of dialogue, and eventually a reduction in crime. Police staff at all levels will benefit from improved policy and training, which will better equip them for dealing with the multi-ethnic reality of Israel.

## Case Study 5 Peacebuilding and social justice in Nepal

### Offering alternatives to violence

Tewa in Nepal is committed to lending for peacebuilding work and promoting justice through its grantmaking programme. This case study provides examples of how Tewa intervened with timely funding for organizations working directly to support young people and women affected by conflict. This has offered them alternatives to violence or revenge,

giving them a new-found voice for peace and justice. The work has enabled personal and community empowerment, created awareness of the impact of conflict, highlighted specific effects on women, and assisted in delivering volunteer programmes and emergency relief responses while contributing to wider and long-term peacebuilding work in Nepal.

Attracting an audience: young ambassadors from the Nagarik Aawaz displaced youth volunteer programme take an open-air performance of their 'theatre for peace' to the village of Tikha in Nepal's Doti district.



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## Tewa

Tewa means 'support' in Nepali and it was founded in Nepal in 1996 to deliver an alternative developmental model. It is committed to philanthropy for equitable justice and peace, promoting sustainable development and women's empowerment. Tewa works to eliminate established hierarchies of gender, class, caste, ethnicity, age and geography. Its work since 2001 with Nagarik Aawaz, a peacebuilding organization that

engages at the community level, and the Sahakarya Shantiko network involved grants totalling US\$30,000, which leveraged further resources for peacebuilding in Nepal.

### For more information

[www.tewa.org.np](http://www.tewa.org.np)

Nepali funding organization Tewa has worked with Nagarik Aawaz (NA) since the latter was founded in June 2001 as violence grew in Nepal as part of the civil war initiated by the Maoist armed revolution. The conflict escalated after the palace massacre of 1 June 2001 in which 11 people among the country's royal family were killed by a fellow family member. The Tewa executive board responded to the mounting conflict by departing from its practice of funding women-only groups and deciding to designate 20 per cent of its grantmaking money for peace initiatives, allowing men's organizations to apply for funds.

Since it began, NA has worked directly with more than 600 youths affected by the conflict, male and female, by helping to create a safety net for them and further engaging them in peace work. The intention was to ensure that young people do not, in desperation, resort to violence, revenge, and self-destructive activities. NA has also worked with many district-level partners through the founding of a nationwide network called Sahakarya Shantiko, and by collaborating with local-level organizations, 12 of which have replicated NA's work with conflict-affected youth. As an indigenous funder and partner, Tewa has given NA and the Sahakarya Shantiko network multiple small grants for social justice and peace work that could not otherwise have been funded.

Early on in the life and work of NA, a displaced youth volunteer programme (NA-DYVP) was initiated. Providing a monthly stipend for each young person for one year, this programme has a three-pronged approach:

- ensure expansion of young people's knowledge and awareness of the impact of conflict and the need for peace;
- provide practical and life skills through training and development programmes;
- offer a broad healing space with associated services and support.

## Kitchens against conflict

Graduates of the programme have been mobilized as peace ambassadors and peacebuilders in various districts with partner organizations that focus on peace work. NA also runs Shanti Bhanca, a weekly 'peace kitchen' where the programme youths cook and serve a hot meal of rice and vegetables to homeless people. Each peace kitchen is attended by 80–120 people a week. In times of heightened conflict,

Fighting talk: this focus group in Nepal's Rupendehi district revealed the harsh effects of conflict on women of all backgrounds, from domestic and sexual violence and criminality to the lack of health services or childcare centres.



NA also initiated the Sahara Kosh emergency relief fund for newly arrived people in urgent need after being displaced from conflict-affected communities. The youths participating in the NA-DYVP regularly participate in NA's peace advocacy programmes, such as vigils and petitions.

NA-DYVP initially hoped to divert youths directly affected by conflict away from a place of anger and revenge to having a commitment to peace. In itself, this would be a big achievement and contribute to Nepal's peacebuilding work. At a relatively early programme monitoring and evaluation workshop, it was discovered that over 90 per cent of the participating youths had not only progressed in this way, but were making further positive transformations to their lives by taking entrepreneurial initiatives by starting microenterprises to further their studies. By 2009, NA-DYVP had run the seventh phase of the programme, and although Nepal is now engaged in a peace process, the young people find the programme and its practical support highly beneficial as the government offers conflict-affected young people no assistance.

## Collecting the voices of women

NA has also organized an advocacy programme at two levels for the needs, dignity and rights of women affected by conflict, especially those widowed or single. In partnership with another organization working for the rights of widows of the conflict – Women for Human Rights – NA led a central-level forum to advocate for women's rights with the government and other concerned agencies. At district level, two cluster workshops were organized in early 2009 with conflict-affected women to broaden and review the NA findings about their condition and situation. Conducted in Bhairahawa in the Rupendehi district and Nepalgunj in the western region, these

## From abuse to a peace activist

The value of the Nagarik Aawaz displaced youth volunteer programme is well demonstrated by the story of Anchal – not her real name – who comes from a dalit or lower-caste family in Nepal. As a teenager living at home in her village and attending school, she had to leave when faced with growing threats of forced recruitment by the Maoist rebel movement. She escaped to live at her sister's home in the city, but was repeatedly raped by her brother-in-law and finally forced to live as a co-wife, even though polygamy is illegal under Nepali law. In the face of intolerable abuse and her sister's resentment, including claims that Anchal's child by her husband was fathered by a Maoist rebel, she was put in contact with NA-DYVP.

With NA support and mentoring, she excelled in everything she did, including street theatre and song competitions, and was a keen volunteer, working hard at NA's weekly peace kitchens and advocacy programme. After a year in the NA-DYVP, she got the chance to work as a peace ambassador with a district-level partner. Anchal's commitment and enthusiasm for the communities in which she works is impressive. She walks for hours each day to reach her communities and has made a significant positive impact. She feels that she has now found her mission in life: peacebuilding.

workshops helped to collect the voices of women for advocacy at the central level and for dissemination to the local media.

Entitled 'Issues of the conflict – women victims in the constituent assembly', the workshops together had an active participation of 50 participants from 18 districts who were representative of the country's castes, ethnicity and geography. There were victims of all those involved in the conflict: state, Maoists, the Pratikar Pamuha community group armed by the then government to retaliate against the Maoists, and the Maoist splinter group Jwala. Over half of the women had lost at least one family member, mostly husbands, to the armed conflict.

## Conflict fosters crime, abuse and anger

The cluster workshops and the central-level forum on 'The effects of the conflict and present conditions' brought out a range of points about the situation of conflict-affected women, including:

- increased domestic violence and instances of trafficking;
- feelings of revenge against those who killed their loved ones and political leaders;
- experience of sexual violence and abuse;
- external migration of youths and women;
- increased criminal activities at the community level and political protection of criminals.

Workshop participants had received no support or rehabilitation from the government and lacked health services. No childcare centres existed to enable them to work as single parents, and infrastructure destroyed during the conflict, such as schools and health centres, had not been replaced. The only positive note mentioned was the inclusion of 33 per cent representation of women in Nepal's constituent assembly. Most workshop women were facing hardship in trying to meet their



families' daily needs for food, clothing and shelter. It was evident that many of the participants were not aware of the relief packages for conflict victims announced by the government, and had not heard of the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction.

## HIV/AIDS and the link with insecurity

Most women had never previously travelled away from their homes, and the workshops provided a first opportunity to raise their voices about the conflict and their situation. Dominance of patriarchy was more prevalent in the mid and far western regions, and the direct linkage between the HIV/AIDS pandemic in the far west and the conflict became clear. The women spoke of gang rapes and a high level of migration by men in their villages to India for security reasons or for work during the conflict. As a result, many married women, especially in the far west, have been affected by HIV/AIDS through their spouses. The representation of women from the indigenous Tharu community provided crucial learning as to how most of the Tharu men in Bardiya district were victimized by security forces. The impact of conflict was also seen in other ways, with widowed women, especially in Nepalgunj, shunning age-old religious and cultural traditions and practices for Hindu widows by putting the 'tika' mark on their foreheads and wearing bright colours.

There were three strands to the workshop conclusions, with the women calling for fulfilment of their basic human rights, such as food, shelter and education, and making a case for childcare centres, opportunities for income generation, and their full and fair representation and participation in peace and reintegration activities. They also revealed the appalling legacy of conflict by raising concerns about the mental health and wellbeing of future generations by asking for community counselling centres; urged efforts to minimize revenge to control potential future conflicts; and demanded an end to the corruption within state structures and the provision of transparent justice to avoid any sense of impunity for those responsible for conflict. Finally and significantly, the women said: 'Help us to help ourselves and others like us, so that we too can participate and contribute to peacebuilding.' NA shared the concerns gathered at the workshops with the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction, and organized a press conference on the points raised as part of its advocacy work.

The issues identified from the workshops vividly depict the hardships and hurdles faced by economically poor women affected by ten years of civil war. The representation of women of varying age groups, ethnicity and caste, and from diverse locations, has made the issues they highlighted more legitimate. The participation of women affected by every group engaged in the violence illustrated the impact of conflict on all women in Nepal.

## United against injustice

As well as their formal conclusions, the workshop women identified other, very positive outcomes: bonding in diversity, the boosting of morale, time for healing and comforting, an opportunity for education and learning as well as advocacy



and lobbying, and their empowerment 'to unite and fight against injustices'. They suggested it would be beneficial for such workshops to be conducted in all other districts in Nepal.

Highlighting the NA-DYVP programmes and the district-level cluster workshops as a part of NA's ongoing advocacy work demonstrates the importance of peacebuilding and social justice work at the local and wider level. It also points to the need for those in both politics and philanthropy to gather and funnel resources for peacebuilding work in areas of conflict worldwide. Tewa's small peace grants are critical in ensuring peace initiatives can happen and be sustained.

## Case Study 6 Whose justice counts in Bangladesh

### Proactive work to reduce potential conflict

The Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) is committed to promoting social justice through its grantmaking and developmental support work in Bangladesh. There is an important emphasis on community empowerment and an awareness of human and group rights within its work with ethnic communities that are impoverished and experience discrimination.

The MJF is a proactive foundation which, as shown in this research-based case study into social justice or lack of it in Bangladesh, especially for the minority Saontal community, reduces potential conflict through its partnership work on social justice issues, thus helping retain peace in a fragile socioeconomic and political context.

Social conservation: the Manusher Jonno Foundation aims to evoke respect and tolerance for diversity, which this dance display is celebrating, and to preserve and promote Bangladesh's local products, culture, heritage and practice.



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## Manusher Jonno Foundation

The Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) fosters human rights and good governance in Bangladesh by promoting the voices of people whose rights are being denied and violated, creating the social environment necessary to build people's dignity, channelling isolated, unlinked efforts about human rights and governance into linked and aligned actions, and challenging the vested interests and established hierarchies in a society that perpetuates poverty.

MJF started its activities in 2002 as a project of the aid agency CARE Bangladesh and launched as an independent organization in 2006. Including a small amount for research, the 'building bridges' project described in this case study cost just over £75,000 (about US\$125,000) over three years to reach 10,000 people.

### For more information

[www.manusher.org](http://www.manusher.org)

Although the universal understanding of social justice is fair treatment for all, the reality is quite different. In Bangladesh, the poor sections of society are generally powerless and therefore have little or no bargaining power or access to basic needs. Their fundamental rights as enshrined in the Bangladesh constitution are often violated due to weak institutions and non-functioning regulatory bodies. The law does not operate in the same way for everyone and usually it is the poor and powerless who become victims of social injustice and discrimination. The provision of equality of opportunity must be combined with social justice principles to ensure equality to marginalized groups.

Examining the situations and conditions of social justice or lack of it in Bangladesh, this study looked at the disadvantaged, vulnerable and unprivileged section of society, both indigenous and non-indigenous, whose reality was assessed in the context of social justice or injustice. This case study's basic conjecture was that a social justice system does not function equally for all sections of society, as it varies in terms of context, location, relational pattern, individual position, ethnicity and religious background. The case study explored a number of concerns: people's perception and understanding of social justice, based on their existing context and environment; how and by what means injustice has taken place; analysing whose justice counts; and assessing MJF's contribution in promoting social justice and peace.

## Collecting first-hand information

This study was carried out in the northern part of Bangladesh, where a large portion of the predominantly poverty-prone Saontal ethnic minority live. This study employed qualitative methods for collecting first-hand information. Group discussions were conducted with staff of the MJF-funded partner organization Brotee to identify possible areas of intervention in promoting social justice and peace. Then three focus group discussions were conducted separately with people from indigenous and Bengali communities and with activists from village-based 'Gono Gobeshona Dal' (GGD) local research teams. The discussions aimed to discover participants' perceptions about social justice, the issues they associated with injustices, the

content and process of victimization, the predominance of social injustice, and their efforts to transform injustice into justice, including the support that they found available. Finally, through personal interviews, case histories were taken from victims of injustice, representatives from service provider institutions and community leaders.

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## Social justice: idea and principle

The preamble of the Bangladesh constitution and fundamental principles of state policy states that social justice is its key pillar. Social justice is based on the idea of a society which gives individuals and groups 'fair treatment' and a 'just share' of the

benefits of society. Social justice can be defined as the ideal condition or standard by which all members of a society have the same basic rights, security, opportunities, obligations and social benefits.

The field data from different ethnic groups, institutional representatives, local leaders, and youth groups confirms that local understanding of social justice differs across age, sex, religion, minority status, socioeconomic condition and educational status. In most cases, it was evident that those consulted felt easier in dealing with 'injustice and insecurity' than 'justice'. One participant claimed that the term justice had become invisible in Bangladesh society. When youth groups were asked what they understood by social justice, they answered that any act that is good is justice and any act that is bad can be considered as injustice.

On the other hand, when minority Saontal people, who make up one of the largest ethnic communities, were asked about the meaning of social justice, they focused on deprivation, exploitation, insecurity and discrimination. Among their concerns were: their land being taken over by powerful people within the local majority community; feeling threatened and insecure because of evictions and violence; lack of access to the labour market, local decision-making processes and assistance from formal and informal institutions; and social exclusion because the majority Muslim community does not interact with them.

## How minorities are losing out

The study confirmed that in every sphere of life minority and poor people do not receive equal opportunities and benefits. Discussions with ethnic groups reveal that more than 90 per cent of children from minorities are not getting educational support from the government although the national average for primary school enrolment is 90 per cent. Neighbouring villages have electricity while no service is available in villages where minority populations live.

Both formal and informal institutions, such as local government, schools, health services, and mediation mechanisms, are less responsive to the needs of the poor and minorities than majority community members. One participant cited an example that in their village, female-headed households entitled to receive government social

safely net facilities were denied such access, while non-deserving families got these entitlements through bribes and other corrupt practices. Focus group discussions with ethnic people confirm that they are not accorded equal rights and benefits.

## Losing land, jobs and wages to the majority

Indigenous people in Bangladesh suffer from lack of social and economic opportunities compared to the non-indigenous people. Most of the Saontal people are functionally landless as, over time, the majority Bengali people have taken over the land. Discrimination in the labour market is more visible in terms of getting work and actual wages, and they face abuse, torture, harassment, and threats of eviction from their land.

Women in Bangladesh are subjected to various forms of discrimination. The situation of ethnic and minority women is worse. The study revealed that most women work as day labourers with men in the agriculture sector. They face wage discrimination for the same amount of work and even that wage is insecure and sporadic. They are also subjected to sexual harassment and violence, they face exploitation at home as well as in the community, yet there are no instances of cases filed for acts of injustice or violence against ethnic women.

In the areas covered by the MJF-backed project, most of the indigenous families and other marginalized communities are landless. The situation of the indigenous community is more vulnerable even than that of other poor communities. They work as agriculture labour on their own land. A land rights study showed that a total of 1,983 ethnic minority families in ten north-western districts lost control over 1,748 acres of land in recent years. The forestry department took over 1,185 acres, while 356 acres were acquired by influential individuals evicting rightful owners from their ancestral lands by forging documents.

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 United action: helping all communities work together, such as this village planning meeting, is integral to Manusher Jonno Foundation's work in creating the project 'Setubandhan' (building bridges) with local organization Brotee.



## Blocking justice for the poor

Poverty, long delays, the high cost of litigation, lack of legal aid mechanisms and unavailability of alternative informal justice delivery systems are considered blocks in the way of access to justice for the poor and minority population. In most cases, access to justice is only available to the rich and powerful elite. Most people are not aware of the rights to which they are entitled, and unfair decisions in courts and local mediation are the result.

The study noticed that ethnic communities as well as extremely poor people in the study area are directly or indirectly excluded from the mainstreaming process. In particular, members of the Saontal ethnic group are a socially separate group because the rich Muslim people do not interact with them. They are not invited to any festivals or other rituals and often are not allowed to enter local restaurants.

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## Fair and equal treatment

The concept of 'social justice' emerged in the development arena as a critical response to the debate about inequality and ill-health. In many societies, the rich and powerful enjoy secure livelihoods while the poor and often a large proportion of minority communities are subject to injustice as they do not receive fair and equal treatment from the legal system or public service providers. In the development discourse, the concept of social justice and peace is widely used in relation to the distribution of

opportunity and risk equally for all. At the same time, the broader implication of social justice in ensuring disadvantaged and marginalized people have equal rights over their entitlements has been recognized. Social justice analysis is very close to the rights-based approach in which analysis shows that the core mechanism for rights violation is inequality arising from structural barriers, unequal power relations and non-implementation of laws and policies.

## A project to build bridges

Against the backdrop of the study's evidence of discrimination, exclusion, violence and denial of human rights, MJF has provided technical and funding support to a local organization, Brotee, to create a project 'Setubandhan' (building bridges). This aims to stimulate and sustain a village movement to protect and promote the rights of the vulnerable communities, create a space for tolerance and respect for diversity and evolve an approach that can be replicable elsewhere.

The project reflects the core principles of MJF, which are to promote the values of transparency and uphold accountability, ensure efficient and equitable use of resources, respect the culture and values of all ethnic minorities and actively promote gender equality and social justice. The project has undertaken these activities to meet its objectives:

- establishing people's research teams to monitor human rights status and prepare joint action plans with the community;
- facilitating a local democratic process in which the people, local government and village organizations work together;



- preserving and promoting local products, culture, heritage and practice, especially of the ethnic communities, evoking respect and tolerance for diversity.

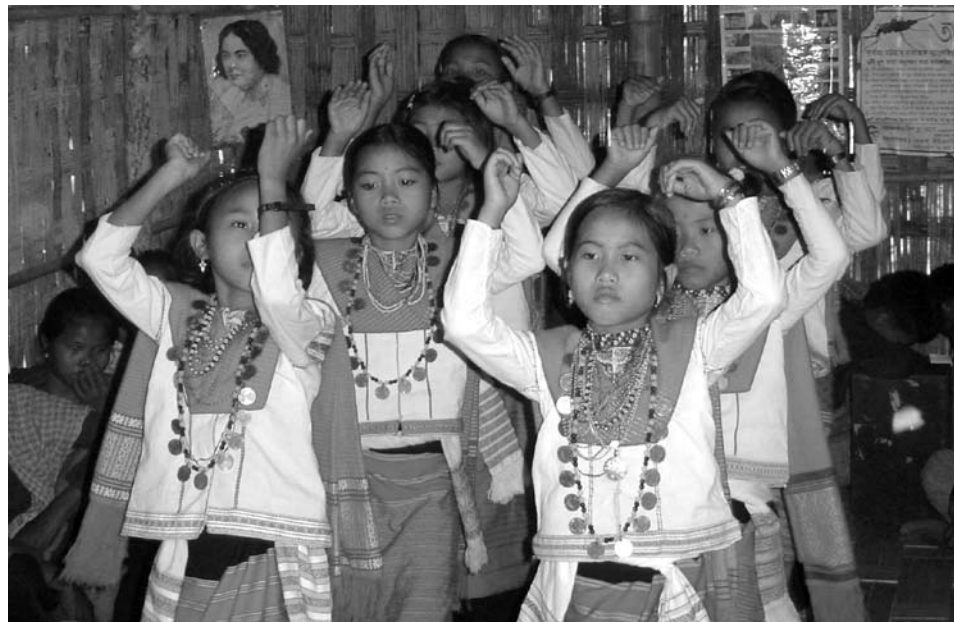
MJF believes that if social justice is established in society, then peace will prevail for everyone in spite of their social, ethnic or religious back ground. In assessing the MJF contribution in promoting social justice and harmony, the project demonstrates how MJF and Brotee are contributing towards progress in five areas: building relationships and harmony, access to services, ensuring security for all, promoting gender development, and fostering leadership.

## From interaction to social harmony

Within the project framework, 36 local research groups (GGD) in 36 villages have been formed, each with 10 members, including representatives of indigenous and marginalized people of that village. MJF has built their capacity through training to conduct research on different problems relating to social injustice and disharmony in their village. The project has initiated interaction among different groups of the community, such as powerful with powerless, ethnic minority with the majority, and poor with well-off, and gradually developed a sense of social harmony and cohesiveness among the village people.

To improve access to services, the GGD have developed good linkages with the local government institutions and other service providers. Through discussions and dialogue they have been able to sensitize them on the situation of the minority and poor community so that these people have more access to public services. Before this initiative, the government safety net programme was not reaching the right people. The GGD has been able to identify and list the most vulnerable among the indigenous and poor community so local government officials know who is in need. Regular follow-up is also done to make sure that the right people get access to such services.

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Fair futures: these indigenous children in Bangladesh are entitled to lives of social justice – from fair treatment to a just share of the benefits of society – which the Manusher Jonno Foundation promotes through its grants and support.



## Success stories: hygiene, health, homes

The prevalence of latrine use was at a minimum in one of the building bridges project villages due to lack of awareness and facilities. GGD members discussed the matter with the village people and motivated them. They gave lectures on the health aspects of proper sanitation and encouraged them to demand such facilities from local government. Consequently, the village got additional sanitary latrines and gradually the village achieved 100 per cent sanitation coverage with assistance from the local elected government.

In another village the satellite health clinic was not functioning well. Apart from vaccination programmes for children, it did not have primary or reproductive health care or similar provision, despite a government allocation for such services. Under the leadership

of GGD, the village people created a movement and compelled the satellite clinics to provide regular services to the poor and ethnic community.

One instance of efforts to ensure security for all came in a third village, where 15 indigenous families among the total of 110 households were under threat of eviction from their land by a rich and powerful person. The GGD mobilized the village people to protest against these evictions. People from both communities joined this protest, giving an ultimatum to the local elected council demanding that the eviction be stopped. Due to their collective pressure, the indigenous families were able to retain their land and now live peacefully.

Along with facilitating child education, GGD has promoted gender development by launching village-based voluntary adult education centres for poor and vulnerable women, including the indigenous community, encouraged savings programmes among women so that they gradually become economically empowered through profitable small projects in agriculture, fisheries and livestock, and been successful in reducing child marriage and violence against women.

Through this project, GGD members have emerged as young leaders in the community and have successfully created village movements to establish the rights of the poor and marginalized. They are now recognized as development agents in the 36 villages and many others are thinking about replicating the model. The GGD approach has paved the way for participation of the poor and vulnerable in the development process of the village. They have been able to establish a link between vulnerable groups and different service providers including the local government bodies.

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## Case Study 7 Social transformation in India

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### In your liberation lies my liberation

Working with women from a range of ethnic groups in India, the Nirnaya foundation reiterates the point that one of the strengths of an indigenous funder is to see social transformation in a holistic context. Working in the same context as its development partners and grantees, Nirnaya is highly inclusive in approach, motivated by its belief that 'in your liberation lies my liberation'. The case of Faizunnisa

and her work, described in this case study, illustrates the deep understanding and shared mission that links the grantee not only at a programme level but also at a personal level. The connection between the empowerment of disadvantaged women and the challenge to the religious, caste and other divisions within society reiterates the point that the personal remains political.

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Bridging the gaps: for old and young, female and male, Nirnaya aims to enable the implementation of women's initiatives and to facilitate reflection and dialogue between communities divided by gender, caste or religious identity.



## Nirnaya

Nirnaya means 'decision'. Established in 1998 and based in Hyderabad, Nirnaya supports women's development projects across regions of India with the aim of enhancing the decision-making abilities of marginalized women. From the outset the policy of Nirnaya has been to support and enable the implementation of women's initiatives and to facilitate reflection and dialogue between communities divided by gender, caste or religious identity. Nirnaya believes that the most effective way of accomplishing

its goals is to bring about a change from within by making the members of society understand, support and contribute towards the economic development of vulnerable sections of women. Nirnaya's support for the work of Faizunnisa's team involved grants of US\$700 (Rs 35,000).

### For more information

[www.nirnaya.org](http://www.nirnaya.org)

The coexistence of empowerment, marginalization and deprivation in a society indicate an existing imbalance in power relations, skewed distribution of resources and the invisibility of certain sections of society. In the Indian context, the three factors of gender, class and caste determine the access to and control over resources and, thereby, the visibility of people. While gender cuts across the whole society in terms of access and control of resources and visibility, class and caste compound deprivation and marginalization, rendering the women of socially excluded communities not only invisible and powerless, but also victims of attack and exploitation.

Caste and communal tensions as a result of discrimination lead to conflicts and clashes. These conflicts and clashes are most often fought on the backs of women. From the clashes in the 1940s before and after independence and partition to the communal and caste clashes in 2007, women in the communities in conflict have suffered assaults. There have been and continue to be honour killings. Added to this is the fact that women have to bear a triple burden because of the additional impact of structural discrimination.

For a decade or more religious fundamentalism has led to riots and created ghettos. This furthers the vested interests of those who have a stake in splitting up society along caste and religious lines. In the beginning, the tension and outbreak of trouble was restricted to the poor sections of society where unruly unemployed young men would be paid by political or criminal leaders to start trouble as a diversionary tactic with the goal of creating instability.

This scenario changed with the intercommunal clashes in which hundreds died after disputes over the Babri Masjid mosque at Ayodhya. The immediate consequence was the involvement and active participation of a large section of the middle classes in disturbances. The Hindu-Muslim riots in Hyderabad, southern India, in 1991 were followed by intercommunal carnage in Gujarat, western India, in 2002.

## Preparing common ground

With its vision of a just and harmonious society, Nirnaya found it necessary from the time of its formation to address issues of conflict and peace. The foundation makes available financial support in some cases for reactive initiatives towards immediate relief and trauma counselling. This support always ensures that there is intent on the part of the partner group to take up and continue proactive peacebuilding measures. Nirnaya raises funds specifically for these initiatives, be they reactive or proactive. This in itself is a way of diffusing polarization and preparing a common meeting ground for a section of people from the clashing communities. Such initiatives have included:

- giving women from the dalit caste in the small and remote village of Shamshallapur in the Medak district of Andhra Pradesh, alienated and subjected to untold humiliation, a revolving fund for livelihood generation through microenterprises in year 2000;
- mobilizing resources for relief and trauma intervention measures during the Gujarat riots and following it up with support for proactive activities for the young women of the affected communities in 2002.

Following a workshop on future strategies in May 2003, Nirnaya decided it had to go beyond responding to conflict with reactive measures and explore ways to support proactive measures to build links between religious and caste-based communities. Having seen the efforts some women, in groups or individually, have made to reject conflict, Nirnaya decided it would work through women who felt the need to defuse sources of tension. In a strategic intervention, with the help of a regional network, Nirnaya identified women from the Muslim minority community to receive fellowships to work on proactive communal harmony initiatives. The women were expected to promote harmony between the Hindu and Muslim communities and their various castes by bringing them together for activities in common.

One such Nirnaya fellow, Syeda Faizunnisa, has been and continues to be a pathbreaker in terms of planning, expanding and moving towards a holistic social change goal. Faizunnisa had tailoring and 'zardosi' embroidery skills that she could teach other women to make them capable of earning a modest income while working from home so she started the small-scale Syeda Faiz Tailoring Training Institute about ten years ago and secured some government sponsorship for her courses before Nirnaya decided to start supporting it.

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## A city with history

Found at the confluence of the Tungabhadra and Hindri rivers and surrounded by hill resorts, Kurnool has a long history and a rich mixture of communities from many faiths and backgrounds who mark a wide range of festivals throughout the year. It was the state capital of Andhra Pradesh from 1953 to 1956, when that role was taken by Hyderabad. With a population of

about 270,000, Kurnool is now a district administrative centre and a market for grain, hides and cotton. The city contains the ruins of a fort built by the Hindu Vijayanagar kings in the 16th century, and is a focus for Hindu pilgrimage. Kurnool was overrun by Muslims in 1565 and was ceded to the British by the Nizam of Hyderabad in 1800.

The focus of Faizunnisa's Nirnaya-backed work has been 700 households out of a total of around 12,000 households in her city of Kurnool in Andhra Pradesh. These slums have homes of one or two rooms in tenements separated by a lane barely three metres wide and a scattering of small mosques, temples and churches. The community is poor and depends on daily earnings.

## Building skills in all communities

The starting point of Faizunnisa's initiative was the 'iftar' party during the holy month of Ramadan, which can involve people from all communities in a small feast to break the day-long fast after sunset. Having gained insights from the women attending the first iftar party, Faizunnisa planned out a strategy to make inroads into the economically deprived and socially excluded communities by using skill building in embroidery and tailoring for a mixed batch of trainees from all communities, whether Muslim, Christian, dalit or 'untouchable' caste, backward caste or upper-caste Hindus. Faizunnisa, who has a good reputation with local people and rapport with local government and is very persistent, spent the first eight months mobilizing and organizing women, at which point Nirnaya stepped up its support by financing the costs of a training centre for zardosi embroidery and another for tailoring in locations Faizunnisa selected.

Despite early pressure from local leaders for her to open separate centres for upper-caste Hindus, Faizunnisa tactfully made clear that the only categorization for entrants would be on the basis of household income. No upper-caste Hindus came forward but the two centres began producing 20 skilled or semi-skilled young women from each six-month course. With Faizunnisa's support, each of the successful trainees set up their own home-based business or secured employment elsewhere.

## Raising funds, one rupee a day

The positive outcome of this initiative got her recognition at the district level with both the government and the local banks. Nirnaya stepped up its support for additional training centres and also provided a short-term revolving fund for capable and needy women wanting to set up or step up microenterprises. In March 2005, Faizunnisa organized her first International Women's Day meeting, which attracted 500 women. In the same year, her team carried out a campaign in which each person involved took a clay coin pot in which they raised or paid one rupee every day for 88 days as a protest against violence against women. This campaign, part of a global effort by an international network of women's funds, attracted high media coverage and public visibility.

The Women's Day event is carried out by all of Nirnaya's grantees and the 88-day campaign was also launched by Nirnaya and more than 20 grant-funded partners across India on 26 November 2005. The clay coin pots were supplied by Nirnaya and it was collectively decided that the entire collections of all the grantees put together would go to the team that came up with the best follow-up programme in terms of addressing needs, the programme framework, its long-term impact, target group

Income generation: amid much tension and potential conflict, Nirnaya has found that livelihood is the central issue for economically poor Indian communities, such as these women who are receiving vocational training.



and budget. The winner was Faizunnisa's team, with a programme for a one-day awareness camp on women's issues followed by the training of 'barefoot' paralegal workers. Planned for 100 women, the one-day awareness camp attracted 300 women from all communities, who for the first time sat together, while the Muslim women were counselled into removing their veils and having lunch.

The camp's facilitator was Satyavati, head of the Nirnaya-supported Telugu feminist magazine *Bhumika*, who declined an honorarium and paid her own travel costs from Hyderabad. As well as making a Rs 7,000 contribution to the camp, *Bhumika* offered legal and documentation skills support to the paralegal training after learning about Faizunnisa's team, the target group, the issues at stake and the need. The paralegal training following close on the heels of this camp created an unexpected response from the entire Kurnool city.

## From legal action to flood response

The intensive training for the paralegal workers – four women from the Hindu community and two from the Muslim community – included fundamental rights, constitutional law and a stepwise approach to taking legal action. They not only cater to the needs of women suffering primarily from domestic violence and exploitation, but also rise to the occasion when there is a community need, such as the unexpected floods in July 2007.

The whole of Kurnool city was inundated and the condition of the dalit families living in makeshift tents on the riverside was horrific. Faizunnisa and her team did a family survey, assessed the damage, counselled the traumatized, gave first-hand information to the local government on the need, collected emergency material from city residents and undertook the relief and rehabilitation work. Irrespective of

a person or family's community, the team not only extended support but brought together on one platform three religious heads: the maulvi or Muslim clergyman, the temple priest and the church priest. For a Muslim woman observing purdah this was a significant achievement.

Close on the heels of this devastation, an incident took place that could have completely destroyed Kurnool city but for the intervention of Faizunnisa's team. On Friday 14 September 2007 during the month of Ramadan, India won a cricket match against Pakistan. Around 9pm that night at the Nal Bandh Masjid mosque, while some Muslim men were offering the 'namaz' prayer, there was a sudden burst of firecrackers outside. The noise and revelry continued, so a couple of men came out from the mosque and asked the crowd to move away from the site since the prayers had already been interrupted several times. The crowd began moving away and the men returned to their prayers, but a while later firecrackers went off again just outside the mosque. When a few of the Muslim devotees stepped out, there were jeering shouts from a few revellers asking if the Muslims were upset because Pakistan lost the match. A reaction from the Muslim men spurred a clash between the two groups of men.

## Intervening to keep communities calm

The police were immediately informed and were able to stop an escalation of the clashes but a high risk of further trouble remained. A senior officer, recognizing that it was not something that could be controlled by the law and order machinery alone, asked for NGO support to work among the two communities and was recommended to contact Faizunnisa. The police chief requested her team's intervention to keep the communities calm and pass on information about potential troublemakers so that the police could take preventive detention measures. The barefoot legal counsellors and Faizunnisa set to work across the slums and were able to pass on vital information to the police very discreetly about the instigators of the trouble. It emerged that there had been an infiltration of troublemaking elements from neighbouring districts into Kurnool in previous days with the specific goal of creating and spreading communal unrest.

The community women from the slums also took another precautionary step by forming a human barricade in their respective slums against entry by any outsiders. Their message was strong and clear that they did not wish any harm to any community and the men could go elsewhere for any discussion on the issue. The women also had discussions with the men in their slums about who would be the losers if there was a communal flare-up, especially in the wake of the calamitous floods. This stopped a conflict that could have destroyed the lives of thousands of poor slum dwellers from both communities.



## Respecting diversity, maintaining harmony

Following this, other NGOs held awareness meetings on communal harmony. The Syeda Faiz Tailoring Training Institute arranged a series of interactive and celebratory programmes from 14 October to 8 November 2007 during which women from different communities came together to eat, laugh and talk to mark three festivals: Ramzan, Dassera and Divali. On 9 November, the institute held a feedback meeting to check the views of the community through its women. The feedback was very encouraging since there was agreement across caste and religious differences that diversity should be respected and harmony maintained. There was no euphoria that the issue had been resolved, but an understanding was established of what is at stake for the economically vulnerable sections of various communities in the event of uprisings.

The Syeda Faiz Tailoring Training Institute followed this up with meetings among high school students at one of which Faizunnisa was posed a question by one boy as to what she would do if she came face to face with Bin Laden. She suggested that a terrorist who takes innocent lives cannot be forgiven by any religion and she would probably shoot him dead. Nirnaya believes this speaks of great courage on the part of this woman who risked the ire of religious heads who believe Bin Laden to be their 'messiah'.

In this case study, Nirnaya did not foresee any trouble as such but sought to protect the interests of the socially and economically marginalized communities through initiatives among the women. Faizunnisa started with a determination to be successful in whatever she undertook and a deep-seated compassion for those she would once have called the 'downtrodden' (today her term would be 'sisters in the struggle'). The transformation came about slowly through Nirnaya's various capacity building exercises in one of which Faizunnisa simply discarded her veil for the duration of the programme. This did not evoke any loud reactions but there were open smiles from everyone present while Faizunnisa spoke about her feelings.

## Finding partners for a shared mission

This case study of Faizunnisa and her team suggests a range of observations:

- The relationship is not strictly that of grantor-grantee but partners with a shared mission.
- While grantmaking's bottom line is commitment to social change, a personal transformation in the leader or leaders can be transferred to the communities in which they work.
- More resources than financial support, particularly in the form of capacity building, is vital.
- Never lose sight of the threat faced by women like Faizunnisa at any point, be it from the state machinery or fundamentalist elements; the foundation should be able to immediately extend its support to the organization or individual unquestioningly.
- Men or women with this kind of courage are change agents and must be nurtured by the foundation.
- This proactive process has taken four years, suggesting that support to such groups should be continuous and for a period of as long as 10–12 years.

- Amid tension and potential conflict, the central issue for these poor communities was livelihood, requiring meaningful engagement with all the communities, separately at first, and gradually collectively.

As an indigenous foundation, Nirnaya can only see social transformation in a holistic context. Working alongside the people and organizations it assists, Nirnaya is highly inclusive because it believes that 'in your liberation lies my liberation'. This deep understanding and shared mission links groups at both a programme and personal level, ensuring there is no pressure on the grantee to use the funds in an inflexible manner. The flexibility lies with each one to stretch or curb an initiative based on the local conditions and their own confidence, courage and support structures.

As a women's fund, Nirnaya is concerned about justice for women in all spheres. But 'gender balance' is not an end in itself; Nirnaya chooses to work its way through other issues while remaining geared to its core belief. Nirnaya sees thin lines dividing funding and action. Strategically, Nirnaya sees the need to avoid being categorized or restricted as activists as far as possible so that issues requiring action are addressed, alongside its ability to meet the financial requirements.



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## Case Study 8 Accelerating change for equality in India

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### Challenging the stereotypes

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This case study from India's Dalit Foundation (DF) highlights the importance of working within a transformatory framework, bringing about positive social change through the empowerment of dalits themselves, but also challenging the stereotypes and assumptions of other groups within Indian society. It is a daunting venture to take up an issue like caste discrimination, which despite legislation to the contrary, is rooted in age-old beliefs that have become

norms and influence daily practice. This often results in the internalization of social injustice within the most disadvantaged sections of the dalit community, as well as circumstances of caste and gender violence. DF's work stresses the need for effective culture-specific strategies that will both empower dalits themselves and work to change current societal attitudes that contribute to social injustice.

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Never too young: dancing in the street, these children look carefree, yet for dalits, the prejudice formally outlawed for more than half a century under India's constitution begins at birth, with exclusion from health services, education and job opportunities.



## Dalit Foundation

Dalits occupy the lowest rung in the caste hierarchy that is still prevalent in many areas of South Asia. They are often treated as untouchables, socially excluded and denied access to land, work and opportunities. The Dalit Foundation was born in June 2003 as a result of voluntary organizations and activists standing up for the rights of dalits in India. It is the only grantmaking institution in South Asia which concentrates on the empowerment of the dalit community and promotes leadership among dalit women and youth. The

Association for Awareness and Human Rights (ADHAR), which has worked with the Dalit Foundation for three years, seeks the empowerment of the dalit community, especially the Musahar community in part of Bihar in India. ADHAR's work has been supported by the Dalit Foundation with grants of US\$5,600 (Rs 280,000).

**For more information**  
[www.dalitfoundation.org](http://www.dalitfoundation.org)

The caste system, which has existed for more than 3,000 years in India, is a traditional system of social segregation, which supposedly works on the principle of purity and pollution. Though the Indian caste system is historically linked to Hinduism, its practice is witnessed throughout India and has been the cause of many social conflicts. Under the system, Indian society is divided into four main hierarchical caste groups or 'varnas':

- Brahmins or priests, the highest varna, believed to have emerged from Brahma's mouth.
- Kshatriyas, the warrior or ruling class made from Brahma's arms.
- Vaishyas, merchants or artisans who came from Brahma's thighs.
- Shudras, the lowest class or varna of unskilled labourers and servants who emerged from Brahma's feet.

Beyond this classification, there is a category of 'ati-shudras' or 'dalits' (as they are now called), which falls outside this hierarchy. They were assigned the tasks considered dirty by the rest, such as handling dead animals or manually disposing of human waste. The word dalit in Marathi literally means 'broken'. Subjected to the discriminatory practice of untouchability, which still persists despite being formally outlawed by the constitution of India in 1950, they are denied access not only to common property, such as water and land, but also to equal opportunities in education and work.

Women in a dalit self-help group in Jehenabad, India.



## Statistics of injustice

The term 'dalit' was coined by dalit leader and father of the Indian constitution, Dr Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, for the social and political mobilization of the untouchable communities. Classified by the government of India as 'scheduled castes', the census of 2001 found that dalits constitute about 18 per cent (more than 138 million) of India's total population. Nearly 90 per cent of all the poor Indians and 95 per cent of all the illiterate Indians are dalits.<sup>1</sup> Their

attempts to assert their rights are often met with strong resistance from the non-dalit 'dominant castes', resulting in massacres, rapes and other atrocities. India's national crime statistics for the year 2000 showed that 25,455 crimes were committed against dalits. Every day, three dalit women were raped, two dalits murdered, and two dalit homes torched, while two dalits were assaulted every hour.

<sup>1</sup> Figures presented at the International Dalit Conference 16–18 May 2003 in Vancouver, Canada.

## Not charity but change and empowerment

The ultimate goal of the Dalit Foundation is to eliminate caste-based discrimination from South Asia and ensure a life of dignity and self-respect for dalit communities, especially women. The Dalit Foundation does not perceive itself as a funding agency but as a social justice organization with long-term objectives. Hence, the approach adopted by the organization is not of charity and development but of change and empowerment. The foundation operates within this very transformatory framework, concentrating on bringing about permanent change through effective strategies, and working with dalit communities to empower them from within and transform their lives.

The Dalit Foundation strongly believes that no social justice organization should exist forever. It should create institutions and leaders at every level who will be able to address the problems themselves in their communities. The organization believes that the sustainability of its work should be reflected in the number of leaders and organizations it nurtures who will not only take the lead of the dalit movement, but also spread the foundation's core values: the belief and practice of equality and self-dignity.

## Half a dollar a day

The Association for Awareness and Human Rights (ADHAR) has been working with the Dalit Foundation for the past three years. The organization works towards the empowerment of the dalit community, with a special focus on the Musahar community in 20 villages of the Majhawalua Block of Bihar's West Champaran district. The Musahars are a dalit community and constitute nearly 1.1 million of the total population in the state of Bihar.<sup>2</sup> Mostly landless, the community comprises the most backward section (socially and economically) of society not only in Bihar but in the entire country. A large proportion of the Musahar population is still employed as bonded labour in Bihar. Their average per capita annual income is around US\$150 and their male and female literacy rates are 2 per cent and 0.09 per cent respectively.<sup>3</sup> The women of the Musahar community are even more deprived of all basic human rights.

<sup>2</sup> Arun Kumar (7 October 2006) 'Culture, development and the cultural capital of farce: the Musahar community in Bihar' *Economic and Political Weekly*.

<sup>3</sup> Woojin Jung *The empowerment of women from excluded communities in Bihar: A documentation of the Nari Gunjan model* Masters of Public Policy, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.

The state of Bihar is also one of the most challenging places to carry out developmental work. It is the only state in India with a literacy level below 50 per cent and it ranks last among India's 32 states according to the Human Development Index and Gender Disparity Index.<sup>4</sup> The state comprises districts and blocks that are socioeconomically the most disadvantaged, with the lowest human development and economic indicators, a low female literacy rate and a high percentage of the population below the poverty line. At the village level, the most marginalized groups are the dalits and other minority communities.

<sup>4</sup> Mahila Samkhya (December 2004) *National Evaluation Bihar*.

The West Champaran district where ADHAR works has the second largest population of the Musahar community in the country. The lack of livelihood options has resulted in a mass exodus of young men to the cities. The women and the elderly who are left behind are engaged in wage labour and even in the peak season earn only Rs 40–50, about US\$1 per day. To make ends meet, even the children are engaged in farm activities, such as rearing animals, fishing, collecting firewood, gathering food and other household work.

## How to reach the unreachable

Education is not made a priority, the school enrolment rate is very low, and girls are looked upon as a liability. The main cause of the Musahars' dismal condition is the fact that they are one of the most unreachable sections of Indian society. There is no willingness among government officials or non-governmental organizations to work with this community. There is no forum to voice their opinions or bring their grievances into the open. Their ignorance has led them to believe that exploitation or violation of their rights is the prerogative of their landlord or the government officials. In all matters related to health, education, wages, land ownership, etc, lack of organization in the community has rendered them helpless to raise their voices and fight for their rights.

In such difficult circumstances, ADHAR works in innovative ways to uplift the Musahar community and also establish peace between the dominant castes and dalits. ADHAR identifies community leaders and provides them with a platform to participate in organizational activities; it promotes dalit women leadership by holding regular meetings, and has also provided legal support in cases of atrocities and crimes against dalits. ADHAR organizes mass awareness programmes through cultural activities like 'nukads' (street plays), puppet shows and poster exhibitions.

ADHAR has begun dealing with land disputes after successfully opposing one attempt at eviction. In 2006, some members of the local dominant caste tried to illegally seize the land of 15 Musahar families in Amuna Bazaar village and used their influence with the police to harass the families to leave. The land, which was a government property, had been used by the families for more than 80 years. ADHAR fought off the evictions, submitting a petition to the chief minister of Bihar, Mr Nitish Kumar, and encouraging the families to protest against the illegal seizure attempt. The petition and protests led to a local official recognizing the right of the Musahar families to occupy the land. The police had to back away and the dominant castes were forced to acknowledge the official's ruling.

## Bringing communities together with food

In addition, ADHAR has adopted a unique approach towards establishing peace between the communities of dalits and dominant castes, with the innovative tool of organizing mass events of intercaste dining. In the caste system, dining with a member of a 'lower' caste is considered a huge taboo or sin. This is one of the most severe forms in which the system of segregation manifests itself. Hence, ADHAR has adopted a very methodical approach of first slowly sensitizing both the communities and then bringing them together through organizing 'Sarva Jatiya Preeti bhoj Sah-Sammelan' (all-caste feast and conference). This four-step approach involves building relationships, leadership training, forming groups, and the annual intercaste events.

The relationship-building step covers the identification of community leaders, both male and female, from different communities of dalits and dominant castes from various villages in their work area. After identifying these leaders, the organization makes attempts at sensitizing them and getting them involved in their training programme. While identifying these leaders, ADHAR makes a conscious attempt to ensure there is adequate representation of women leaders from both communities. Through these leaders, the organization aims to get their communities involved.

The identification of community leaders is followed by an induction into ADHAR's leadership training programme. Through these workshops, ADHAR closely interacts with these leaders and provides them with awareness and personal motivation training. These training programmes are held three times a year with a minimum of 25 and maximum of 40 people per group. The three-day workshops discuss important issues affecting Bihar's rural communities, from understanding the evolution of human society and the nature of the caste system to the dimensions of poverty.

## Dispelling the myths of caste

The workshop begins with a session on the evolution of human society to give the participants a deeper understanding of how society is continuously developing and why it is important to understand and accept this change to progress at the personal and community level. In rural India, education and awareness levels among people are very low. In addition to this, lack of resources and extreme poverty foster an atmosphere of ignorance and rigid thought processes. Thus the next session on the caste system, its origins and its negative impact on Indian society aims to dispel the myths associated with the system and challenge the state of mind of the participants about caste. A session on poverty in India reflects the need to understand it if it is to be fought and eliminated. This session is very important in the contemporary Indian context, in which the cities are progressing and the villages regressing, while poverty and caste overlap as the dalits are the most economically backward section of society.

## Fewer atrocities show group success

After successful training, the participants are divided into two main groups: 'Dalit Vikas Manch' (dalit progressive group), which has 250 trained leaders, and the 'Jan Jagran Manch' (dominant caste awareness group), with 175 trained leaders. Both groups work with their communities and periodically meet to discuss various issues. The groups spread awareness, raise and discuss relevant issues and sensitize their communities on caste and gender issues. The most important contribution of the groups has been establishing harmony between dalit and dominant-caste communities. Since these groups have been formed, the level of atrocities in the region has decreased considerably.

## Averting community conflict

The important contribution of the groups of dalit and dominant-caste leaders can be seen in an example of a potential conflict averted by prompt action. In 2007, a member of the Musahar community, Raghuni Manjhi, his sons and some companions were beaten up by a dominant-caste man, Sanjay, and some of his friends. While with his friends, Sanjay was driving his tractor badly, and Manjhi and his group, who were pedestrians on the same road, protested. The argument took an ugly turn as Raghuni Manjhi and his group were physically assaulted by Sanjay and his friends. Under the influence of the dominant castes, the local police arrested Manjhi and his companions. This led to tensions between the dalit and dominant-caste

communities that urgently required the intervention of ADHAR and the groups of leaders. Within a week of ADHAR'S intervention, Manjhi and his companions were released by the police. The dominant-caste 'Jan Jagran Manch' group played a major role in this case, discussing the issues with Sanjay and his community. As a result, Sanjay came forward with his group to admit his gross wrongdoing towards Manjhi and his companions. Both communities arrived at a peaceful reconciliation, and adequate compensation was given to Manjhi and the others. The most positive support was provided by the dominant-caste community leaders, who not only condemned Sanjay's actions but also came forward to work out the reconciliation.

As the final step of the effort to further integrate both communities, do away with caste disparities and to break the notion of untouchability, ADHAR organizes the annual intercommunity meal. In a unique social event, members from both the dominant castes and the dalit caste dine together. This is a big step toward establishing peace between the two communities of dalit and dominant castes, especially in a region like Bihar where the levels of caste conflict and caste-based atrocities are extremely high. The 'all-caste feast and conference' has been held once a year since 2005 and has had a major impact not only on the people associated with the organization and its groups but on both communities as a whole. Successfully sensitizing the dominant-caste community, the ADHAR-organized event has witnessed participation from more than 500 people from different communities. A striking aspect of the event is the overwhelming response from women as each year they make up half the attendees.

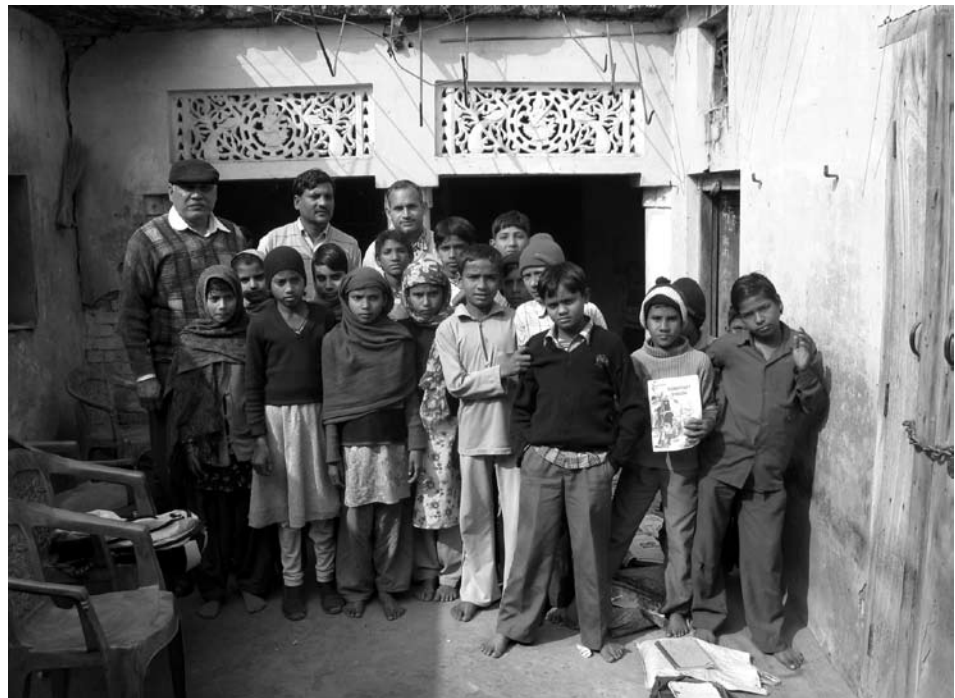


## Conclusion

The efforts of ADHAR have not only brought the dalit and non-dalit communities together but also led to the active participation of dalit women in community organizations. There has been an attitudinal change regarding untouchability, education and health. In each village of their work area, a 'Dalit Adhikar Manch' (dalit rights platform) has been formed in which one third of the participants are women.

An issue such as caste discrimination is all about struggling against and challenging a certain kind of mindset. There is no visible enemy but only age-old notions and misconceptions. Change comes gradually and takes a long time. The work of organizations like ADHAR can bring about significant changes only if more grassroots organizations are supported and leadership from within the discriminated community, with a special focus on women, is encouraged and nurtured.

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Uplifting lessons: in the village of Hapur in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, this informal school for dalit and Muslim children is helping to make cross-community links and to counteract the lack of priority given to education among impoverished minorities.







## Reconstruction Women's Fund

Founded in 2004, the Reconstruction Women's Fund was the first local women's foundation in Serbia. It brings together the three approaches of pacifist and anti-militarist efforts, feminist academic work and local activism, including taking part in demonstrations demanding rights and justice. Its mission is to support women's emancipatory social and political role, from backing women's NGOs and empowering networking,

cooperation and solidarity to reacting to urgent situations with rapid response grants issued within 72 hours. In its efforts to assist Nedzibe Mitrovic, the RWF spent a total of US\$1,540.

### For more information

[www.rwfund.org](http://www.rwfund.org)

Tair Tairi, an ethnic Albanian from Macedonia, was one of the numerous poor migrants who in the 1950s searched for a job in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). He settled in Belgrade and had a job in the state transportation company. Tairi found a small room in downtown Belgrade which was part of a slum. He bought it from another Macedonian and built an extra room to live with his family. His daughter Nedzibe was born in that home in 1959.

More than 30 years later, in 1991, the SFRY started to disintegrate, with a number of violent and bloody wars and a major socioeconomic transition. Civilian citizens had to survive all the consequences, with many exposed to atrocities and injustice.

Tair Tairi died, as the family lawyer put it, having waited all his life to get an apartment. Getting a state apartment was a part of the socialist state's 'deal' with its citizens, and a taxation on workers' wages contributed to the housing budget. Tairi's daughter married and divorced and stayed as Nedzibe Mitrovic in the slum where she had grown up. Since it was in downtown Belgrade, the small house was a target for redevelopment. One investor planned to knock down the old house and construct a large new building. He negotiated compensation with the tenants and, in coming to Nedzibe, found all her vulnerabilities: she was poor, a woman, and had an Albanian father. Quite a number of Albanians had been living in Belgrade for decades but had been stereotyped as labourers or petty traders. Although the first globally famous film star from Belgrade was an Albanian, he and the other prosperous people were omitted from these stereotypes.

## When a stereotype makes you vulnerable

The conflict between Serbia and Kosovo, with the war in 1999, has become an obsessive issue in recent years, due to Kosovo's declaration of independence and the resulting Serbian campaign against it. Nedzibe had never lived in Kosovo, and her father came from another country, Macedonia. However, she fitted well into the stereotype, had no visible support, and was vulnerable. When Nedzibe refused to leave her home, the investor cut the water, then the electricity. Anger and greed made him rationalize the situation as: 'You are Albanian, so you should go back where you came from.'

Ljiljana Jakovljevic had been Tairi's lawyer for 30 years. She undertook the work of the legal representative fighting for Nedzibe's home: 'I would stay until 3am typing the appeals and complaints. It was a permanent state of urgency. Our administration is notoriously slow, but in this case, the municipality and city authorities brought decisions promptly. It was obvious that the investor was privileged.' Supporting Nedzibe in crisis, the lawyer worked for less than one third of the normal tariff. Nedzibe suffered heart problems from the four years of stress and constant pressure by the investor.

They decided to ask the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia (HCHR) for protection. The HCHR lawyer, Ljiljana Palibrk, took the initiative to increase public pressure. She sent the case to the president of the republic, parliamentarians, the city mayor, the chairman of the municipality, and international embassies. There was no response. She addressed the media and on 10 October 2007 the news agency BETA carried an article on the case and it was reported on the Serbian b92 online news channel. But silence soon followed again. There was no further media involvement. In spite of the lawyers' appeals and claims that what the investor was doing was illegal, and while the process was still in court, the day of the house's demolition was decreed as 6 December 2007.

Defying injustice: tackling the denial of the rights of an individual or group is only possible when a range of actors come together in solidarity to confront the various statutory institutions and economic power in Serbia.



## Serbia's 'disturbing' rights record

Although the constitutional and legal human rights guarantees in Serbia are in accordance with the internationally accepted standards, the actual state of human rights has been more than disturbing. Therefore the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights

in Serbia (HCHR) was established in September 1994 as a professional organization working on the promotion of the idea of the rule of law and protection of human rights.

## Repression, demolition and broken glass

Women in Black (WiB), an antimilitarist feminist group, heard about the case from the HCHR and WiB activist Ljiljana Radovanovic went to help to prevent the eviction and demolition. The situation was desperate. Two policemen, a representative from the municipality, the investor's representative and four workers with tools arrived. The HCHR lawyer and WiB activist protested that there was no warrant for the demolition, without result. Nedzibe stayed with the family in the house threatening that she would blow herself up. The police broke into the house, dragged Nedzibe to the police station and kept her all day. Released late in the evening, she found only ruins, broken glass and pieces of her possessions left lying around. Nedzibe and her son put what was left of their furniture into a truck and left.

As a witness, WiB activist Radovanovic felt enraged and humiliated. She wrote a report to explain the injustice of the case and highlight the ethnic-based repression and accused the municipality and the city of acting above the courts and the state. The media did not respond, but feminist activists in Serbia had developed alternative ways to get information out to the wider public.

## Spreading the word about injustice

One of those committed to this was Jasmina Tesanovic, an international writer, blogger and WiB activist. She posted Radovanovic's report about the solidarity action on her blog (b92 Jasmina Tesanovic). Readers of the blog reacted more positively than expected, pointing out the human rights violation, the social injustice and corruption, and the responsibility of the state. Although there was no support from the mass media, the word spread: two international blogs (Advocacy Project and Orbus Belgium) posted the articles and the monthly magazine *Republika* published the case, accessible at CEEOL (Central and Eastern Europe Online Library). Zokster.net linked to the report and received comments as well.

Radovanovic stayed in touch with Nedzibe Mitrovic, and two weeks later, she wrote an appeal to ask for citizens' solidarity with Nedzibe, who needed accommodation and medicines. Tesanovic posted the appeal on her blog, opening a new round of debate. Institutional reaction was finally provoked. The manager of the municipality phoned the WiB office with a long explanation, attempting to whitewash what had happened and asking the author of the report and public appeal to write a retraction. It was a critical moment. The case was no longer a private matter. The investor started to offer small amounts of compensation. The lawyer asked for full compensation or a new home for Nedzibe. It was a question of strength, nerves and time. Nedzibe was exhausted with health problems.

## Making resistance visible

Women in Black (WiB) Belgrade is a feminist and antimilitarist peace organization that was founded in 1991. In making the non-violent resistance to militarism, war, sexism and nationalism visible, WiB has led around 700 street actions, from protests to

performances. It has also built a women's solidarity network, organized peace education, called for demilitarization and disarmament, and demanded accountability for war and war crimes.

The Reconstruction Women's Fund (RWF) contacted Radovanovic, who was in constant communication with Nedzibe, to offer support. The question was: what did Nedzibe need most at that moment? RWF could offer modest but flexible financial support for six months. RWF was buying time for Nedzibe and backing her up in a situation that was risky and close to blackmail. The investor started to raise his offer to the lawyer, but she remained adamant. Nedzibe's housing was at stake. Finally the investor gave in and paid the full compensation for the home that was destroyed. The case was over. Nedzibe's doctor advised her to move away to give herself time to recuperate. She bought a small house in a village and moved in.

## How the law can fail the poor

The case of Nedzibe offers a number of lessons in social justice and peacebuilding, most clearly that if she had stayed alone and isolated, she could neither have fought the legal complexities of the case nor survived the inhuman pressure and power of those with money. Her vulnerability was high because of her gender, poverty and ethnic background. Even with support, her prolonged personal involvement ruined her health.

The poor cannot depend on the law for defence. Legality became a political obsession in Serbia after it was introduced by the conservative government that came to power in 2004. The concept was an excellent tool for the manipulation of justice and truth and provided an obstacle to those who could not afford to engage with the process. Bureaucracy on all levels worked in favour of the powerful and created barriers for those with no resources to fight back. The construction field, being very profitable, has proved open to corruption, while the privileges of the rich and powerful are obvious in comparison to poor people and those who respect the law. Any legal aid system should take account of the needs of those who would otherwise have no access to justice.

The use of blogs and the debates they provoked show new ways to articulate causes for concern. Tesanovic showed the power of a blog to announce, denounce, provoke debate and ask for accountability. It rouses empathy, breaks feelings of powerlessness and isolation and promotes citizens' and activists' voices.

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## Getting the word out

Jasmina Tesanovic has long used the internet to raise attention to undercover issues. A feminist, political activist with the groups Women in Black and Code Pink, translator, publisher and filmmaker, Tesanovic

has been writing her blog on the b92 news site since 2006. She is the author of *Diary of a Political Idiot*, a war diary written during the 1999 Kosovo war and widely distributed on the net.

## Ready to act against discrimination

All the organizations and individuals involved in this case have been ready to cooperate, to lead or to assist. The years of experience of the Helsinki Committee on Human Rights and Women in Black, which both have clear political vision and the boldness to challenge political injustice, enabled this case to be resolved eventually. Reconstruction Women's Fund, a local foundation working on a comprehensive feminist platform against war, nationalism, racism and all kinds of discrimination, confirmed the effectiveness of its readiness to be involved, to act promptly and flexibly and to take a political stand.

The case of Nedzibe demonstrates that the intersection of conflict, post-conflict and sociopolitical transition is a ripe field for violence, while an ethnic background can become a tool for injustice through pressure, hate and threats. Stereotyping diminishes the individual, allowing discrimination and the withholding of rights and benefits. And, as always, poor women are extremely vulnerable when crossing the path of financial interest.

## Drawing the threads together: the role of philanthropy in social justice and peacebuilding

The wide-ranging case studies included in this report highlight the complex interconnections between social justice and peacebuilding. They also demonstrate how limited funding and interventions delivered in a timely manner by philanthropic organizations that possess local insights, knowledge and connections can go a long way towards breaking the silence around aspects of structural injustice, and build towards a culture of rights that contributes to more peaceful societies.

The case studies emphasize the role of indigenous funders in often complex and difficult circumstances, bringing an awareness of where rights-framed development work can contribute to peacebuilding and challenge established norms. When Nirnaya formed its supportive partnership with Syeda Faizunnisa of Kurnool, in Andhra Pradesh, this not only laid the basis for the upskilling and confidence building among many hundreds of impoverished Indian women, but also enabled positive relationships to be forged across diverse communities of women – Muslim, Christian, Hindu and tribal groups – that worked to alleviate intercommunal violence.

Similarly, the Manusher Jonno Foundation, working with marginalized minority communities in Bangladesh; the Dalit Foundation's programme of activities in partnership with the Association for Awareness and Human Rights in India; Tewa

Protest movement:  
although constitutional and legal human rights guarantees in Serbia are in line with internationally accepted standards, cases like that of Nedzibe Mitrovic taken up by the Reconstruction Women's Fund and other groups suggest that the actual state of human rights is far worse.



in Nepal working in partnership with Nagarik Aawaz to assist young people affected by conflict; and the solidarity in Serbia offered by the Women's Reconstruction Fund to the beleaguered Nedzibe – all emphasize the crucial role of relationship building, awareness raising and a very basic belief in the value of human dignity and collective solidarity. Local partnerships were built on this basis to provide the critical added value dimension to philanthropic funding.

Equally, indigenous philanthropic organizations can have a finger on the pulse of the often fast-moving developments in societies experiencing violent conflict, allowing them to exploit the potential of time-limited strategic opportunities. Despite recent developments in their respective societies, the Neelan Tiruchelvam Trust (Sri Lanka), Fundación AlvarAlice (Colombia), the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland and The Abraham Fund Initiatives (Israel) demonstrate where philanthropic leadership can effect policy change or at least humanize the consequences of violence while sharing ideas and learning from other societies. The Neelan Tiruchelvam Trust brought members of the Association for Disabled Ex-Soldiers and the Right to Life group to Belfast to meet with victims and survivor groups there, and AlvarAlice drew heavily on the experiences of South Africa in planning for the inclusion and reintegration of victims of violence in Colombia.

However, having access to independent, flexible sources of funding – often sourced externally to the country or region – was critical to enabling much of the work described in the case studies to take place. The potential for effective partnerships between indigenous funders and external philanthropic organizations or agencies is very important and needs to be developed in practice. Such partnerships work best where they hold to a shared understanding of a programmatic paradigm that is grounded in a recognition of peacebuilding and social justice.

Minority rights: the Manusher Jonno Foundation seeks to empower those from Bangladesh's minorities, such as these women from the disadvantaged, marginalized and poverty-prone Saontal community, to claim their rights.

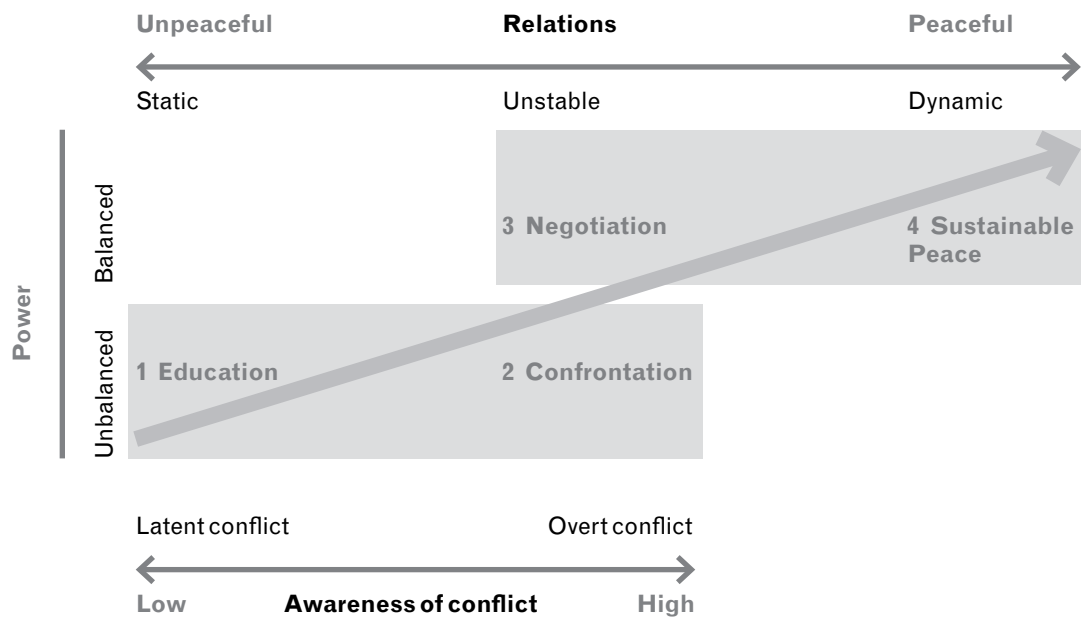




## Peacebuilding and social justice: a shared understanding

The nature of the work for social justice and peacebuilding depends largely on each societal context and the dimensions and stage of the prevailing conflict. In his study *Making Peace* (London, 1971) Adam Curle framed the progression of conflict in this way:

### The progression of conflict



This provides a framing that can inform the potential for philanthropic investment at various stages of the conflict. At the point of early or latent conflict, actions might include raising awareness of injustice, particularly of structural injustice; supporting advocates and alliances for change; helping identify non-violent strategies for change and related skills training; and facilitating marginalized or silenced groups to find their voice.

At the point of overt, ongoing conflict, funders can support:

- the safeguarding of human rights;
- community-based peacebuilding initiatives;
- skills training in negotiation and mediation approaches;
- development of imaginative, less threatening approaches, such as through the arts, to discuss sensitive issues;
- opportunities to open up informal contacts between combatants;
- inclusive dialogue to humanize ‘the enemy’ and enable people to hear what ‘the others’ have to say;
- work with victims of the conflict.

When conflict shifts into the search for sustainable peace, there are also important openings for funders:

- transferring learning from other societies emerging from conflict;
- ensuring the voices of the marginalized are included in any peace settlement;
- rebuilding the lives of groups devastated so they do not become symbolic of previous or future divisions;
- supporting demilitarization and decommissioning of weapons;
- reintegrating victims and ex-combatants into society;
- developing approaches to deal with issues arising from the violently contested past;
- reconfiguring a future that is rooted in a culture of rights and social justice.

The opportunities for all these areas of work are expanded by the indigenous-external philanthropic partnerships that are rooted in a shared understanding.

Relating this work to the case studies, it can be seen that the programmes undertaken by Manusher Jonno Foundation and the Dalit Foundation relate to the latent conflict phase. The former shows how discrimination faced by minority ethnic groups within Bangladesh is often hidden, while the Dalit Foundation study highlights how lack of confidence and organization among dalits can render them powerless. The Neelan Tiruchelvam Trust, AlvarAlice and The Abraham Fund Initiatives are all working within the spectrum of overt conflict, as is Tewa in Nepal, although the latter merges into the conflict transformation phase, which is where both the Women's Reconstruction Fund and the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland are located. The areas of priority for both Nirnaya and the Women's Reconstruction Fund, which focus primarily on structural injustice as it relates to women, remind us that the social justice lens cannot be confined to contested regions. This then brings us to consideration of the contribution of structural violence, in which discrimination, oppression and marginalization are experienced by specific groups or classes within society, so creating the circumstances of conflict.

The members of the Foundations for Peace Network recognize that very often those people who engage in direct violence are seeking to address the perceived injustices of structural violence through fighting for systemic changes that might

.....  
 Rejecting violence:  
 Foundations for Peace  
 member Tewa has  
 intervened with timely  
 funding for Nepali  
 organizations supporting  
 women affected by conflict,  
 such as those at this  
 peace workshop who are  
 exploring alternatives to  
 revenge and gaining a voice  
 to call for justice.



improve their lives. However, all too easily the inequalities that arise from structural barriers and radical imbalances of power can be related to ethnicity, religious affiliation, caste, nationality and other considerations. Social justice is generally viewed in terms of distributive justice, with an emphasis on how advantages, resources and power are distributed to groups of people across a society. But there is also the issue of positional injustice, such as differentiation on the basis of race, gender, disability or minority ethnic status, which is clearly relevant to the ethnic communities in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh, the indigenous communities in Colombia or the Palestinian community in Israel. Within many violently contested societies there is a clustering of injustices, and while formal peacemaking often focuses on an end to the violence, sustainable peacebuilding requires not only the reduction of direct violence but also the development of a culture of rights that adequately addresses issues of social and economic justice. This is the point where peacebuilding and social justice become mutually reinforcing.

## Social justice and peacebuilding philanthropy

The members of the Foundations for Peace Network have recognized that it is not enough to simply condemn violence or the lack of social justice; it is important to identify strategies for change that are smart, effective and acceptable within the respective societal context.

In each of the case studies, the same factor emerges time and again: conflict stems out of the exercise of power and injustices perpetrated by the powerful. While power imbalances are often supported by established belief systems and traditional hierarchies, some of these come from an earlier history of resistance to colonialism and other historical circumstances. The almost inevitable consequence of this situation is that victims can become combatants, resulting in violent conflict that can serve to spread victimhood by perpetrating further injustices and abuses of human rights.

This vortex between social injustice and violence serves to blur the clarity of distinction between oppressors and the oppressed, and between victims and combatants, as justifications are marshalled for the demonization of 'the other' community or group. This is where the importance of a local funder can play a part, where there is the courage to be able to ask questions of the apparent simplicities of the 'them' and the 'us', and the willingness to probe beneath the consequences of violence in order to identify its root causes. In sharply divided societies, small steps can take courage: making eye contact with a person from 'the other' group; sharing a meal with them; being prepared to listen to their point of view and to be open to the fact that it may be possible to share space in spite of differences.

Indigenous funders can have the local knowledge to identify and work with individuals and organizations to make such initiatives happen, but working in partnership with other philanthropic organizations, they can also support measures that translate the learning from such initiatives into both policy recommendations and community mobilization.

The role of philanthropy has been likened to acupuncture, in its search for the strategic points of action. Depending on context, such strategic points of action may be listening to silenced voices:

'We never thought that it would be possible for us to educate our children in our own language. It is like a dream – but now the dream has come true as my daughter is now going to the Phulchhora Community School.'

*Boda Soga, Rangamati District, Bangladesh, with the involvement of the Manusher Jonno Foundation*

Strategic action may be found through the empowerment of groups of people that have been marginalized, like the dalit sweepers in India:

'I firmly believe that only leadership rising within the community can address the issue of manual scavenging more effectively. Young leaders in Ahmedabad have initiated a process to educate the sweepers to demand and use proper equipment. Further, many sweepers have stopped collecting human waste lying in and around public toilets. Their future plans include the education of the "civil society" to become more civil!'

*Vijay Parmar, Ahmedabad, India, with the support of the Dalit Foundation*

Or strategic action can take the form of demanding an inclusive peace process for a society emerging from more than 30 years of violence:

'The fact is that in many working class areas, it is groups like ours who originated as ex-prisoner groups that are doing the peacebuilding work, because so-called "nice" people from "nice" groups and agencies don't want to be there and don't see the problems in these areas as being anything to do with them. Peacebuilding is not "nice" work; it forces us all to look at ourselves, examine our beliefs and confront our prejudices.'

*Marion Jameson, Armagh, Northern Ireland, with funding from the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland*

These are three very different voices, working in very different circumstances, but all emphasizing the importance of local voice to work in partnership with local philanthropy for peacebuilding and social justice. The added value that locally based philanthropic organizations can bring to the work of peacebuilding and social justice includes:

- the role of convening, to bring groups together across sectarian, ethnic, caste, gender and other divides and work with partner organizations and initiatives to ensure that this can happen safely;
- proactive support for individual, group and community empowerment in order to ensure that struggles around social justice and peacebuilding are inclusive of those people that have been most disadvantaged and marginalized;
- building networks of solidarity at both community and NGO level to advocate for social change;
- being prepared to use the reputational capital and legitimacy of their position as indigenous funders to support advocacy and recruit supporters and champions for

- peacebuilding and change from broader sections of society, such as business, trade unions, media and politics;
- being sensitive to the specific adverse impact of violent conflict, division and social injustice on particular groups within communities, such as women or young people, and working with them to develop appropriate initiatives;
  - being open to adopting a range of both grantmaking and non-grantmaking programmes in order to support work around peacebuilding and social justice;
  - building relations at an external international level and using examples of progressive change and transitional justice approaches from other societies to challenge and broaden existing thinking.

However, the impact of strategic action for peacebuilding and social justice can be enhanced by partnership between internal and external philanthropic effort, in a situation where the indigenous trust or foundation can make external donors aware of current aspirations, hopes, fears and strategic opportunities.

Such partnerships work best where there is a respect for the learning that has emerged from the experience of philanthropic endeavour in areas of violent conflict. The work for both sustainable peace and building a culture of rights is invariably long term. The process of the strategic intervention is also often as important as the output, particularly where there is a need to empower disadvantaged groups.

Given that one characteristic of a divided society is the prevalence of suspicion and conspiracy theories, there needs to be sensitivity as to how 'well-meaning' interventions might be interpreted or misrepresented. Related to this, divisions within and between communities can be aggravated by an overly narrow, single-issue agenda of a donor. Indigenous trusts and foundations can play a crucial role in mediating all these issues, bringing a flexibility of approach and understanding that larger external organizations may find more difficult to adopt.

## The added value

Using small sums of money to achieve a big impact on sensitive and difficult issues requires the willingness and ability to move outside the comfort zone of much philanthropic grantmaking. It is also based on the premise that the sources of 'small money' will be made available and that the importance of external-internal philanthropic partnership approaches is recognized. What the external philanthropic partner brings is not only money but also a macro perspective and contacts that can be incredibly important in situations of violent conflict. What the local partner contributes is not just the added value element and the micro 'pulse' of the situation, but also the guarantee of living with the decisions taken. It is this combination that can deliver an effective strategic approach. Ultimately, those who are suffering as a result of violence and social injustice should expect no less.

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# Foundations for Peace

<b>Vision</b>	Foundations for Peace envisions a pluralistic society across the world that respects human rights and dignity and in which conflicts are resolved through peaceful means.
<b>Mission</b>	Foundations for Peace is a global network of independent, indigenous funders working to advance equality, diversity and interdependence in areas of entrenched and persistent communal conflict with a history of, or potential for, violence.
<b>Goals</b>	<p>Foundations for Peace has three strategies. These are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– to draw lessons from and share models of good practice in peacebuilding that have been implemented within and between local communities;</li> <li>– to influence and advance public policy to support equality, diversity and interdependence nationally and internationally;</li> <li>– to inform, influence and increase the flow of philanthropic funds to support indigenous peacebuilding foundations across the globe.</li> </ul>
<b>Objectives</b>	<p>To implement these strategies, Foundations for Peace will pursue the following objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– to ensure that the membership and leadership of Foundations for Peace is diverse in religion, gender and culture and reflect all regions of the globe;</li> <li>– to promote solidarity between members to provide individual and organizational support;</li> <li>– to build individual and organizational capacity through sharing skills, knowledge, experiences and good practices;</li> <li>– to promote collaboration between members (programmatic, training, research, resource mobilization);</li> <li>– to gather, analyse and disseminate the collective learning of network members.</li> </ul>
<b>Values</b>	<p>Foundations for Peace values the sanctity of human life as set out in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (1948).</p> <p>In particular, Foundations for Peace wishes to make a distinctive contribution to peacebuilding in areas of entrenched and persistent communal conflict with a history or potential of violence. The values that underpin network members' philanthropic interventions in areas of such conflict are equality, diversity and interdependence.</p> <p>Foundations for Peace is non-partisan and shall not take positions on global political issues. Each member authority will have full autonomy to develop policies, positions and practices relevant to its mission and philosophy within its sphere of interest.</p>

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## A note on membership of the Foundations for Peace Network

- Membership criteria** Full membership of Foundations for Peace is open to independent, indigenous, activist grantmaking foundations currently working in divided societies and addressing issues of peacebuilding, social inclusion and/or social justice.
- Affiliated membership** Affiliated membership is open to those independent, indigenous grantmaking foundations that would meet the full membership criteria and who are interested in FFP's work but do not feel that they have the capacity to become full members at their point of application.
- Associated membership** Associated membership is open to foundations, groups or individuals that do not meet the full membership criteria but have an interest in our work and share our ethos and values. These members should have the potential to contribute to the work of the Network and be active in the field of social justice, human rights, peacebuilding and social inclusion.
- Process** Membership is subject to applicant organizations submitting an 'expression of interest' form which is available in several languages on our website – [www.foundationsforpeace.org](http://www.foundationsforpeace.org)



Recently published  
**A new agenda?**  
**The European Union**  
**and Cultural Policy**  
 by Hans Erik Næss

**Culture seems to affect the lives of European citizens more and more. In 2007 the European Union (EU) endorsed 'A European agenda for culture in a globalising world', their 'first-ever strategy for culture'.**

To anyone familiar with the history of the EU, this was groundbreaking news. Culture had for the first time been elevated into the premier league of EU politics. In this book, which ranges from cosmopolitan philosophy to Playstation games, Norwegian sociologist Hans Erik Næss investigates the case further: what is the content of this strategy, what is new about it, and how will it affect European and national cultures?

Written in an easily accessible style, this book allows the reader to explore these questions. It provides students, philanthropists, culture journalists, artists, NGO staff, politicians and the like with a creative introduction to the interactions between EU policies and European culture.

**"New to the world of publishing, I was exceptionally pleased with how well APT took care of me and my book project."**  
 Hans Erik Næss

For this title Alliance Publishing Trust (APT) provided a complete service including:

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## Alliance magazine

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[www.alliancemagazine.org](http://www.alliancemagazine.org)  
 or contact [alliance@alliancemagazine.org](mailto:alliance@alliancemagazine.org)

***Small Money, Big Impact* is a report drawn from the combined experiences of nine independent charitable trusts and foundations that are members of the Foundations for Peace Network. What is both unique and compelling about these organizations is that they are all indigenous to, and working in, societies that have been marked by deep communal divisions and violent conflict. They share a commitment to social justice and peacebuilding in often difficult and complex circumstances.**

Drawing on nine detailed case studies from eight countries in Asia, Latin America and Europe, this illustrated report discusses the relationship between social justice and peacebuilding while reflecting on the added value of using indigenous foundations to deliver local programmes in areas of conflict and division. A common theme is how small amounts of money can leverage major impact in terms of building solidarity and partnerships for social change.

The Foundations for Peace Network was initiated in 2003 with the mission of developing a network of independent indigenous funders that work locally in order to advance social justice and peacebuilding in areas of entrenched and persistent communal conflict. The Foundations for Peace Network believes that philanthropy both can and should make a commitment to addressing these issues in partnership with local independent funders to draw maximum long-term benefit locally while contributing to global learning.

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