

# **Assessment of Lessons Learned from Sida Support to Conflict Management and Peace Building**

**Annex 1–5, Case Studies**

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**Sida Evaluation 00/37:2**

**Department for Cooperation  
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## **Annex 1**

### **A case study on the Western Balkans: Evaluating Sida's support to the Olof Palme Centre (1998–99)**

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Oslo (PRIO)**

# 1. Preamble

The peace process in the Balkans is a very complex subject that over the years has involved a large number of initiatives, actors and channels in different parts of the region. The process reflects the internal dynamics of the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia, which led from one crisis to the next.

This whole process and the contributions from different actors are, of course, impossible to measure with a high degree of precision. Nevertheless, the contributions from sectors and channels can be assessed in broader terms. Civil society is one of these sectors. Civil society was generally undeveloped in the former Yugoslavia (with Slovenia to some extent providing an exception), but, during the 1990s, civil society organizations emerged everywhere. Some were purely local initiatives; others were the result of foreign support either through international NGOs or international bodies with programmes for supporting third-sector development.

Between 1991 and 1999, Sweden has spent more than 2 billion SEK in the region, including grants to organizations working for human rights and democracy. Sida began supporting such initiatives through the Swedish NGO channel in 1993/94, and, since 1997, an Action Plan for Peace, Democracy and Human Rights has given directions for this involvement. In this case study, we will focus on how such funds went through one nongovernmental Swedish organization, the Olof Palme International Centre (OPC) and examine its support to 25 projects in 1998 and 41 projects in 1999 across the Balkans. We will also assess this support in the light of the evaluation criteria established by ALNAP in 1998 for evaluations of peacebuilding activities.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. Introduction

### 2.1 Sida policy

When the Swedish support for democracy and human rights started in the former Yugoslavia, the focus was on independent media, human rights, dialogue and reconciliation, short-term research and network activities. The Action Plan for Peace, Democracy and Human Rights reformulated the goals to strengthen people's chances for and abilities to live under peaceful conditions. This should be done by increasing their local coping mechanisms in general and by increasing their participation in and development of the democratic process in particular.

Since then, the policy focus has been on promoting respect for and compliance with human rights, not least those of women and children. This is to be accomplished through the provision of support both to civil society groups and to state initiatives, and by increasing the complementary effects between such efforts.

In practice, this has meant support for capacity building in local structures – social movements, community-based organizations, local associations, NGOs and independent media. To a lesser degree, initiatives from abroad have also been supported. Swedish NGOs are the main channel,

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<sup>1</sup> Active Learning Network on Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Assistance.

supplemented by some support through INGOs and regional organizations. Priority areas have been: (a) activities directed at peace and dialogue, (b) defence of human rights and (c) democracy building.

This policy was only defined in broad terms, leaving open a wide space for different peace initiatives, antiwar campaigns and other reconciliation-oriented processes from organizations and social movements. Support is set to continue as long as nationalistic governments are in power, until problems related to repatriation of refugees have been solved and peace has been stabilized.

The administrative guidelines, also from 1997, drew attention to the short-term issues. Of particular relevance should be:

- Public-awareness campaigns
- Information about and support to the Hague War Tribunal
- Educational collaboration with trade unions
- Support to activities aimed at empowering women's role in society
- Capacity building of local NGOs, interlinking their networks and contact with media
- Peace-relevant cultural activities.

Emphasis has been on sustainability and diversification of impact. In particular, Sida has warned against donor dependency and encouraged Swedish NGOs to carry out risk assessments. It has also encouraged local monitoring of public responses to peace initiatives and looking out for possibilities of cooperation with international organizations and even local government institutions. However, the guidelines set no clear benchmarks or performance indicators against which outputs and results can be measured.

Consequently, it is today hard to say to what extent Swedish NGOs have succeeded in realizing these priorities. Since the priorities were loosely defined, the interpretation of best implementing strategies has also remained quite loose. At this point, however, what we can say is that our general impression is that OPC's work has been placed well within the frames set under Sida's policy areas.

## 2.2 Administrative set-up

At Sida, the Division for Western Balkans (EVB) within the Department for Central and Eastern Europa (Sida ØST) is responsible for the *coordination* of all of Sida's assistance to the Western Balkans. The division is also responsible for *reconstruction* and *development*. The Department for Cooperation with Nongovernmental Organizations and Humanitarian Assistance (SEKA) is responsible for humanitarian assistance.

## 2.3 Specific mechanisms for support

A requirement for support is that the applicant organization has knowledge of and experience with this type of assistance. Sida itself assesses how well the organization meets these requirements. Political sensitivity and knowledge of local conditions and international efforts are particularly important.

A second requirement is administrative capacity to investigate and monitor project implementation according to the requirements set out in the contract between Sida and the Swedish NGO.

Support is given on the basis of Sida's priorities, quality assessments and submitted budget proposals. In Sida's assessment criteria for proposed projects, emphasis is placed on long-term impact, the

spreading of effects, cost-effectiveness, comparative advantages over other similar activities and gender/environmental concerns. There is no fixed deadline for applications. Administrative overhead at head office is normally 5%, but this is defined with considerable flexibility in order to also cover other costs, depending on the type of activity under consideration.

### 3. The assessment

The first challenge for us was that of defining ‘our project’. Unlike the other case studies, Sida is here only a donor, not an implementing partner. The grant receiver is the Olof Palme International Centre, while the implementing partners are more than 40 local organizations.

Thus, OPC – with its package of democracy and human rights projects in the Western Balkans – has been defined as the project. The partners are the ‘sounding board’ that might reject or confirm that the ‘project’ is in line with the policy definitions and expectations of the programme.

OPC has a frame agreement with Sida. This is a three-year revolving arrangement, which indicates that OPC will receive every year approximately 7 million Swedish Kroner in project support after submitting an annual application. In contrast with the section for Enskilde Organisasjoner (EO) unit in SEKA that supports all kinds of projects from Swedish NGOs on a 80/20% basis, this programme provides 100% funding for democracy and human rights projects.

In addition to the programme above, OPC’s ‘owners’ have their own development projects supported by Sida<sup>2</sup>. Sweden also utilizes other channels – multilaterally through EU and UN organizations and bilaterally through state-to-state cooperation with other governments for specific geographical areas and programmes. In other words, Swedish support for local activities may trickle down through many lines and for many purposes, even to the same recipients. As elsewhere, it is not always easy to form a complete picture of how and where Swedish public money is spent in the Balkans.

A comparative assessment of the pros and cons of different channels, partners and programmes is a complex exercise that would go far beyond the ambitions of this case study. However, it is necessary to keep this broader picture in mind as a back cloth to the more specific aid system within which OPC peace support is operating.

#### 3.1 Methodology

The first step in the evaluation process was a brief review of the main Sida and OPC documents (see attached literature list). On the basis of this, the whole task was re-examined. Once the focus of the investigation was thus clarified, a research strategy was formulated. The next steps were the designing of the main data-collection instrument, the selection of the research subjects and the making of practical arrangements for field visits.

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<sup>2</sup> OPC’s owners are the 33 member organizations within the Swedish labour movement (the social democratic party, the trade unions (*facket*), the cooperative movement (*kooperasjoner*), their women and youth organizations, plus almost 3 million individual members.

Only nine days were available for the whole study. Thus, a main challenge was to identify the ‘point of optimal ignorance’ – What was the minimal information needed to answer the main questions posed in the inception report?

Some key research questions emerged: To what extent does Swedish support for peacebuilding and conflict management in the Western Balkans, channelled through OPC, fulfil its objectives? What kind of initiatives are supported, and how relevant and effective are those activities? What contributions does OPC add to this work that would justify a continuation of the programme?

In order to answer these issues with some degree of certainty – given the limited resources available – it was decided to reach as many partner organizations as possible by direct communication. Out of 41 possible project visits, 13 organizations were chosen. In the selection we tried to strike a balance between logistical limitations – i.e. how many organizations it would be practically possible to visit over a few days – and our ambition to cover as wide a geographical and thematic area as possible through in-depth interviews lasting for at least two to three hours each.

It was eventually decided that we would make two separate trips to the Balkans: one trip to Macedonia and Kosovo in late August and another trip to Serbia, Bosnia and Croatia in early September. The feasibility of this approach had to be checked out beforehand with OPC and Sida, so a first visit to Stockholm was made at the end of July 2000.

### **3.2 Preparatory visit to Stockholm**

Besides these practical reasons, another purpose for the Stockholm visit was to find out how much assessment of relevance, coherence, gender equality, flexibility and institution building would be possible to manage. This would be hard enough to do for one object, let alone a large number of different activities and organizations spread out all over the Western Balkans.

The visit was also important for setting ambitions at a realistic level. Our intention was to consult with partner organizations on how, from their perspective, they perceived OPC, and what possibly made OPC special to them in comparison with other donors. Thus, a key question in all communication with the partners would be to ask what added value (besides Sida money) OPC contributes to their projects.

In Stockholm, the whole OPC programme was examined and relevant written communication with Sida was presented and commented on. This included contract formulas, agreements between Sida and OPC, copies of internal correspondence in Sida and the *promemoria* document that substantiated the final decision of Sida support. Because of the timing of summer holidays at Sida, it was not possible to speak to any of the key people there, but a telephone conversation took place with Sida’s desk officer for OPC before the first visit to the region.

During this two-day visit, we went through the total project portfolio and identified the organizations we wanted to visit.

### 3.3 Selection of partners

Out of more than 40 partners, 13 organizations were selected.

| Country/province   | Organization                                                                                                                                           |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Macedonia          | Centre for Multicultural Understanding and Cooperation, Skopje<br>Union of Macedonian Women, Skopje                                                    |
| Kosovo             | Kosova Civil Society Foundation, Pristina                                                                                                              |
| Serbia             | Humanitarian Law Fund, Belgrade and Pristina<br>Republika, Belgrade<br>Centre for Non-Profit Sector Development, Belgrade<br>Open University, Subotica |
| Croatia            | Centre for Peace and Human Rights, Baranje<br>Centre for Peace Studies, Zagreb<br>Centre for Councelling of Women, Zagreb                              |
| Bosnia-Hercegovina | Citizen Forum, Tuzla<br>Centre for Democratic Alternatives, Sarajevo<br>Helsinki Citizens Assembly, Banja Luka                                         |

Since the main purpose of our Balkan visits was to get local perspectives on cooperation with OPC, this non-random selection procedure was considered optimal. Partners numbers and geographical spread would hopefully compensate for unintentional bias in representation.

The vast majority of organizations were already in full swing when OPC arrived and initiated the cooperation. According to the inception report for this study, these projects come under the label of ‘support to local peace initiatives’. In a few cases, OPC was the first donor and played an indispensable role as midwife for the organizations. In that sense, the projects could also be categorized under the rubric ‘institutional capacity building efforts’. To our knowledge, none of the projects can be said to have been involved in silent diplomacy under ‘Track Two interventions’.

### 3.4 Data collection methods

In order to systematize the collection of data, an extensive interview guide was made. This was e-mailed to all the organizations two to three weeks prior to our visits, together with a brief explanation of the purpose of the visit. Here the interviewees were asked to familiarize themselves with the questions and, if possible, to fill out the questionnaire before our arrival in order that both sides could have a more productive and interesting conversation. OPC also informed the various organizations about our planned visits. Many of the organizations have homepages on the Internet that could be consulted. Speaking to other people in the area was a third method of gathering information about specific and general topics relevant for a broader assessment of the quality of OPC-assisted activities.

### 3.5 Field visits

The two field visits took place from 18–24 August and from 6–15 September. We also spoke with people in the Swedish embassies and general consulates about OPC as well as with representatives from UNHCR, OHR and OSCE to obtain a more general picture.

Staff members from the Nansen Dialogue Centres in Skopje, Belgrade, Sarajevo and Banja Luka assisted in arranging appointments, translation and logistics.

## **4. Olof Palme International Centre**

### **4.1 General Description**

Excerpted from OPC's homepage at *www.palmecenter.se*:

The Olof Palme International Centre was established in 1992 by the Swedish Social Democratic Party, the Trade Union Confederation (LO) and the Cooperative Union (KF). Today OPC has 33 member organizations.

The commitment of these member organizations is the core of the centre's activities. As voluntary organizations, they are represented in all Swedish municipalities, in most residential districts and at many workplaces.

OPC's activities focus on international development cooperation and the forming of public opinion surrounding international political and security issues.

OPC carries out relatively few international development projects itself. The member organizations and their local cooperation partners are responsible for planning, initiating and following up projects. This helps to create very strong local ties.

OPC and its member organizations are involved in approximately 200 projects a year. This covers everything from civic education to organizational structure, human rights and reconciliation.

International development cooperation is concentrated in six regions: the Balkans, the Baltic states and Russia, Central America, the Middle East, Southeast Asia and Southern Africa.

In Sweden, OPC carries out comprehensive information and opinion-forming work on issues concerning international development, security and international relations.

The centre also administers the International Solidarity Fund, which is the Labour Movement's own fund for international solidarity and development cooperation. All money collected by the I-Fund is used exclusively to support trade union and political development work.

The head office is situated in central Stockholm. There are currently 17 employees.

### **4.2 Activities in the Western Balkans**

OPC's current policy for the Western Balkans was devised in 1997. Country strategies defined the major objectives and concentrated on ten points, focusing on sustaining peace, supporting civil society, providing input for training in conflict transformation, reconciliation and refugee return, improving respect for human rights, supporting a free and independent press and the ideals of multicultural existence. This meant developing relationships to organizations working for such goals, in particular organizations involved in gender and trade union matters, youth organizations and networks for peace, democracy and regional coexistence.

The annual reports from 1998 and 1999 show that 5,019,649 SEK (5,580,000 allocated) and 7,690,330 SEK (8,051,000 allocated) were spent on 27 (29 planned) and 41 projects (42 planned) respectively. About a third of the projects were new each year.

The annual reports provide short regional highlights covering the main features of recent political development and outlining where the most pressing needs for OPC assistance are to be found. This is followed by some fragmentary comments from each country, partly commenting on the general situation and partly on the specific projects. Finally, each project is presented – with key information about project goals, target groups and types of activities as well as short comments on gender issues, sustainability, risk assessment and other relevant aspects.

Otherwise, OPC's reporting is done on an aggregated level, where Sida does not see the actual narrative and financial reports from the implementing partners unless it specifically requests them.

Under the established routines, Sida forwards the application from OPC to the respective embassies. Comments from these sources provide the main basis of knowledge upon which Sida management writes the decisionmaking document (or *promemoria*) that authorizes the support. In this process, OPC is often asked to clarify certain points for the programme desk. Sometimes this leads to projects falling out – either during or at the end of the application process.

## 5. Findings from field visits

We found OPC's regional strategy for the Western Balkans to be both comprehensive and ambitious. However, the broad focus makes the strategy less useful as a managerial instrument for identifying and selecting partners and it is difficult for OPC staff to use in everyday life. All partners easily fall within the defined frames, which create a very heterogeneous organizational picture (see Annex 3 for more detailed presentations of partners' activities and the funds granted by OPC).

In our view, the activities seem relevant from a peace and democracy perspective. We also feel that they are implemented by competent and highly motivated staff members who have strong feelings of involvement and ownership with regard to their projects. Some of the activities have a strong grassroots orientation ('activist approach'); others seem to be more directed towards reflection, social critique and policy development for the civil society ('intellectual approach').

Both approaches are well justified within Sida's framework. In fact, we believe that they are complementary approaches and that are both necessary if a wider impact on the social environment shall be achieved. The more these forces are able to combine their efforts, the stronger we would expect the results to be. In practice, however, many factors inhibit such interplay. The organizations are faced with the double task of transforming their societies while at the same time changing their own internal dynamics towards greater transparency and participatory decisionmaking processes. This is, of course, part and parcel of the broader conflict and transitional picture and itself a symptom of why external support is important.

Transformation seems easier in small, activist-oriented organizations with fewer ties to the old power structures than in organizations with broader political programmes, complex organizational structures and personal connections with key people in high political positions. This latter element also represents somehow a continuity of the old political class of the former Yugoslavia. This is an advantage when it comes to practising 'political handicraft', but is a disadvantage when it comes to

recruiting young people for a new policy agenda. We hesitate to label some of these as ‘change agents’, so obvious among the activist-oriented organizations. On the other hand, they may have more influence on structural changes than the marginal peace organizations.

OPC’s support goes to both kinds of organizations. We see no reason to criticise this diverse choice, but would rather encourage the organization to make the choice more explicit and to draw actively on its own network of related member organizations by linking Swedish trade unions, various social movements (peace, environment, education or so-called *folkeupplysning*) and the cooperative movement, etc. to organizations working for similar ideas in the Balkans.

The two oldest of OPC’s partner organizations were founded in 1992, but most of the partners were established between 1994 and 1996, the latest in 1998. Almost all received their first donations from a foreign donor. Later, they broadened their funding sources to include support from public sources wherever possible, most successfully in Croatia.

Their total annual financial expenditures vary from almost 700,000 USD to the smallest at 25,000 USD. However, most are in a bracket around 100,000 USD. For the largest of the organizations, OPC’s contribution represented a fairly small part of their total budget (4–10%). For the others, the Swedish support amounted to somewhere between 20 and 35%.

In terms of membership base, this varied from several hundreds to only a few founding members, but all had well-structured organizations with executive boards, advisory councils, executive managers, project staff and even control bodies. Two thirds of them also had graphical charts of their structures. Apart from one organization with 40 full-time employees, most of them employed from three to five staff members. In addition, all had either paid part-time or voluntary activists.

When asked about how often the organizations meet and discuss issues with representatives from government bodies, other regional bodies/regional NGOs, multilateral organizations, Sida, other donor governments or Swedish NGOs, almost everyone said they had frequent talks with the local and international NGO community. More randomly, this also included Sida and other Swedish organizations. The pattern of contact with government institutions varied quite systematically with the political situation in each country, with the most contact in Croatia and the least contact in FRY.

### **OPC’s ability to promote trust, equality and reciprocity in the partnership**

When the partners were asked to think about ‘partnership’ they all emphasized awareness of common identification of goals, strategies and target groups. Sharing of information through regular communication and reports were imperatives. In real partnership, there should also be joint financial security. Expectations towards OPC as an objective monitor of project progress was also mentioned.

When asked whether there had been a shared vision on conflict management and peacebuilding right from the beginning, all said yes. However, when asked to specify, the answers provided varied considerably – from those who said that OPC’s inputs had been quite crucial (as in the Kosovo case) or moderately important (as in the Barajne case) to those who said that they did not know OPC well enough to say yes, although their answer tended in that direction. The human factor in communication was estimated highly, but in addition the general feeling of compatible common goals and values, interests and agendas was emphasized as important for this feeling of being in an authentic partnership.

Apart from one, all said that the collaboration with OPC had other qualities than cooperation with other organizations. This was mainly explained by referring to OPC’s support during the project

development phase, while leaving space for their own responsibility and independence. This was further explained by many as being due to personal trust and respect as well as to understanding that peacebuilding work may not give tangible results until after many years. It was claimed that OPC is not like other donors, but has more willingness to discuss local priorities and needs as well as more organizational flexibility when they act. Almost all said that OPC should spend more time visiting their organizations.

### **OPC's ability to promote the consciousness of gender issues in the work of the partners**

To what extent do they feel that OPC initiatives have succeeded in promoting gender issues in their national and local contexts? Several organizations said that this did not apply to them, either because they were not engaged in such work or because these activities were supported by other donors. The rest were divided in their opinions about OPC's influence on their gender work at both the national and local level. About half said OPC's efforts were too moderate, while half said they were too much. One respondent gave a wider argument, saying that providing support for youth sections of women NGOs would help them to set priorities and strategy for working on gender equality among young people. This was considered a very important step in a future development of youth activism.

### **OPC's ability to strengthen partners' organizational capacity**

By and large, OPC efforts in this area seemed casual. When partners were asked about in which ways OPC had assisted in building organizational capacity, the answers they provided were generally vague. Some mentioned specific inputs to operate and maintain office equipment or provide professional support from abroad. But, more importantly, by sharing information about other projects and local knowledge, OPC in practice demonstrated that it had confidence in its partners.

Among specific organizational inputs, three areas were most frequently mentioned: (a) staff training (both formal and nonformal to enhance technical and interpersonal communication skills as well as the capacity to use modern mass media to disseminate information); (b) in operation and maintenance of office equipment; and (c) by providing professional input from outside or experience from other projects, local knowledge, local institutions and local media.

However, more efforts in the field of organizational capacity building were wanted from OPC. This included training in management and leadership functions, in building team spirit and motivation in the staff, in strategic planning, in helping to connect with other OPC partners in the region, in organizing regional meetings and in giving feedback on reports sent to OPC.

### **OPC's ability to be a dialogue partner in the process of project planning, implementation and evaluation**

The interviews made it quite clear that there is a wide need for more input in this field. Many informants wanted professional, but partner-oriented, support to project management tools and techniques. In addition, standardized application forms with simple guidelines were suggested. Again the need was expressed for more OPC presence in the field. Besides the material support for a project, it is very important to raise the efficiency and professionalism of coordinators in project implementation and animation of project participants.

### **OPC's ability to assist the partners in their efforts to become independent of foreign funding for the project activities**

Half of the organizations have strategies for local fundraising. And many of the remaining organizations admitted that local fundraising is a good idea, but they had not yet come that far. For those who had, usually up to 10% of revenue came from such sources. However, according to a widely shared view, the bad economic situation makes such efforts senseless. This is a more predominant view the further south one moves in the region. In Croatia, it certainly makes more sense to plan

on increasing the reliance on local sources than in some other countries in the Balkans. One organization had developed plans for strengthening the constituency and collecting membership fees, charging participants fees when they attend training, cooperating closely with the state office for NGOs (established in 1998) and lobbying for a change of tax legislation in a more positive direction.

One case is quite exceptional. This partner is the only one that is registered as a business association. Today it raises 50% from local and regional sources, 25% from citizen participation and only 25% from foreign donations. It is also the only one that had a policy of reducing donor dependency.

### **OPC's ability to include partners into a regional network of like-minded NGOs and connect resource persons for mutual exchange of experience and evaluation**

How often and for what purposes did partners participate in OPC network activities (such as seminars, meetings, electronic communication, newsletters, training, educational visits etc.)? We asked them to indicate 1 if they had a strong positive attitude, 2 for slightly positive attitude, 3 for slightly negative attitude and 4 for a strong negative attitude.

The following average scores emerged:

| <b>How important is networking for your organization</b> | <b>Seminars comm.</b> | <b>Meetings</b> | <b>Electronic</b> | <b>Newsletters</b> | <b>Training</b> | <b>Educational visits</b> |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|-------------------|--------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|
| General relevance                                        | 1,5                   | 1,25            | 1,5               | 1,75               | 2               | 1,75                      |
| In preparing new activities                              | 2                     | 2               | 1                 | 1,75               | 2               | 1,5                       |
| In implementing practical activities                     | 2,25                  | 1,75            | 1,5               | 2,25               | 1,75            | 1,5                       |
| Support functions and follow-ups                         | 2,5                   | 1,25            | 2,75              | 1,25               | 1,75            | 1,5                       |
| In setting project objectives and evaluate achievements  | 2                     | 1,75            | 2,25              | 2                  | 1               | 1,75                      |

The table shows that networking in general is quite strongly supported. Electronic communication in preparing new activities and joint training in setting objectives are most clearly recommended, as is how to monitor results. But also meetings and seminars for general purposes are rated quite highly, together with newsletters and meetings for sharing support functions and follow-ups. Only seminars, newsletters and electronic communications get slightly negative ratings as a means of sharing support functions.

On open questions, the informants emphasized their wish for more networking as a method of strengthening links between them and other organizations, including organizational segments of Swedish society. More visits from OPC and more people working in the region were repeatedly mentioned, and there was even a suggestion about the setting up of local offices. Regular regional meetings to exchange information and to discuss if there are issues that they can work on together – such as return of refugees, pollution control and other confidence-building measures – were also seen as desirable. A joint evaluation forum came up as a specific idea.

### **OPC's ability to fulfil other roles and functions as perceived by the partners**

Finally, the partner organizations were asked if they felt that OPC has the ability to understand issues that are important to them in their own contexts. On this issue, there was a unison positive agreement. Everybody said that they feel that OPC has much empathy with them as local partners. But almost everybody also said they feel they have no influence on OPC's own goals and strategies. The main reason seems simple: they do not know the donor except for its staff and activities in the Balkans. This is also why several of them suggested that a partner meeting in Stockholm could be very useful. Here one might connect directly to organizations with special knowledge of a certain

topic relevant for the local partner, such as ecological agriculture and the making and marketing of such products, just to mention one concrete example that was raised during our conversations.

## 6. Conclusions

If OPC's efforts are added together with what other Swedish NGOs – such as the Swedish Helsinki Committee and Kvinna til Kvinna – have done with funds from the same source, the total Sida support to democratic forces in the Balkans becomes quite impressive. If one adds the qualitative aspects of how the support was delivered, this becomes even clearer. Local partners generally seem to agree that this support has empowered them because it has been based on authentic dialogue.

But the Sida programme lacks well-defined objectives and priorities. This makes it vulnerable to random interpretations of the direction it should follow. It also lacks fixed standards and norms for how the implementation should be measured. So, how do we know if the programme meets the needs when there is no real analysis of the needs in the given context and vague parameters for achievements? In addition, when there is no real definition of civil society, it is also hard to know what to expect from organizations that operate within that context. From this follows also that the strategic components are weak: why are local peace initiatives important, and how should one tie together separate activities into forceful social actions that can have the wider impact expected by Sida policymakers?

As the situation in the Balkans moves from conflict to post-conflict, the aid system is also changing. This is reflected in the growing presence of Sida personnel, either in separate offices or as integrated staff in the Swedish embassies. We welcome this development and believe that it will improve the quality of Swedish aid. But we believe that the strongest impact from Track Two activities<sup>3</sup> is best achieved when voluntary organizations of OPC's type – carved out of their own historical struggle for social justice – are allowed to operate rather independently. Such organizations are in a better position than professional diplomats and aid technocrats to create the trust and confidence in local implementing partners vital in the 'peace business' at local level due to their joint value basis.

We will back up this argument by referring to Sida's Evaluation 99/24 on 'Sweden's Assistance to Bosnia-Herzegovina: A Study of Aid Management and Related Policy Issues'. B-H is relevant in the sense that, since 1995, it has moved from conflict to a post-conflict situation. It is also the Balkan country where most of Sida's support has gone in the 1990s and where the Swedish aid machinery is most developed.

The evaluation study argues that 'assistance to post-conflict areas should be governed by the metaphor of a mix rather than a bridge, i.e. diversity rather than linearity', and concludes that Sida has done this to a reasonable degree. In line with conventional principles of development assistance, it recommends that future development policy should focus on transformation of old power structures, by emphasis on good governance, recipient responsibility, sustainability and capacity building of local institutions and NGOs. 'Sida should encourage the restructuring of local NGOs, including the closure of those NGOs that are deemed not to be viable'. Several Swedish NGOs are now well

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<sup>3</sup> The tender document for this Sida evaluation defined Track Two activities in wide terms: as peace-making efforts that lie outside formal or Track One diplomacy, ranging from back channel (i.e. officially deniable) negotiations, through forums of leading individuals used by parties as sounding-boards for ideas, to citizens' dialogues for building mutual understanding and trust.

established in B-H, which is why there is less need for Sida pro-activity' (in the sense of not only taking own initiatives, but also supporting initiatives of others – authors' remark).

Finally, we are aware that overlapping, duplication and competition between donors and recipients may impinge on effectiveness. However, from a pluralistic point of view, a certain degree of overlapping may not be so negative. First of all, because the needs usually are far greater than what is being offered. Then, because positive spin-offs often come unintentionally or even unexpectedly. Thus, we believe that the 'seed principle' should be applied when distributing support to peace interventions. Reflections on peace practices are still in the early stages and should be taken much further before one should start to draw conclusions as to what are the most effective strategies.

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From the field visits, we were left with the strong impression that OPC should do more to inform their partners about OPC itself. Very few people we spoke to had more than a very vague idea of their Swedish partner. For most people, the level of understanding stops with their contact persons in Stockholm. In other words, OPC should broaden the interface between itself and the partners.

We had limited possibilities to assess the horizontal integration of work with other peace forces in their respective areas. Some partner organizations obviously have large networks both locally and internationally which have been established over many years. For them, OPC is only one among several donors that makes it possible to carry out a large spectrum of activities alone or in cooperation with other local organizations.

However, what we could observe is that there is a large untapped potential for regional cooperation. Some organizations have already established direct links or at least know about each other. But our impression is that this is more a coincidence than the result of conscious efforts by OPC.

OPC has no uniform mechanisms for project applications. Our impression is that this should be corrected and some simple criteria for project selection applied, together with instructions about managerial principles in project implementation. This should be available both in English and the local language.

Our impression is that the strategic element in OPC's approach is too intuitive. The good side of this, which was praised again and again by the partners, is OPC's ability to listen, understand and take a flexible approach to the ideas and suggestions coming from them. The negative side is that it leaves the impression that the partners and the projects found OPC, rather than the other way around.

We may also question OPC's selection of some of its partners. There are other Swedish NGOs that have specialized in support for media and for women organizations. Why should OPC support such organizations? If it is because OPC has a certain political perspective that makes this natural, it should say so clearly. If it is because other Swedish organizations fail to see the quality of a local partner, it should say that as well. OPC could even argue that a certain element of donor pluralism from Sweden is preferable to too much donor coordination. But again, OPC should make their own reasons for selecting their partners more transparent.

The political nature of this support should be lifted up both in the policy dialogue with the partners and with Sida. Although all foreign aid has political implications, and thus is not neutral, the political implications of desired changes in democracy and human rights supported activities are more direct than in most other forms of aid. This means that the support goes to – and in our view should continue to go to – organizations and persons deeply involved in political-change processes.

The ethical justification for this is that it is transparent and directed towards building a political culture with the necessary political institutions. A line must always be drawn against party politics. In practice, this can be extremely difficult, particularly in complex, prolonged crisis situations like those in the Balkans, where NGOs are among the few political institutions from which one can work towards changes in a democratic direction. These organizations are, of course, also a training ground for individuals with political ambition. At this moment, there is no reference to such reflections in the main OPC documents.

The annual application format is another topic for discussion. From 1999, OPC has had a three-year rolling frame agreement with Sida. This gives both sides the advantage of longer planning horizons and facilitates a more strategic managerial leadership from OPC. But the existing document must be improved. As it is, the logical gap between OPC's overall long-term goals in the Balkans and the proposed support to organizations and activities is too wide to be convincing.

The standard formats (or lack of them) used in making project proposals are clearly inadequate. This was mentioned by many partners. Everybody admitted that there is a need for greater professionalism in project management. On the other hand, there is a widespread scepticism towards introducing more bureaucratic procedures. This is not specifically directed against logical framework methods or other modern project management tools, but rather against the practice experienced with other donor organizations that apply such instruments. Here it is a question of 'not throwing out the baby with the bath water'. This becomes particularly important in the field of PBCM. Analyses of output, impact and conditions under which projects may fail (so-called 'killing assumptions') are more complex to conduct for this kind of project than for other types of interventions.

In our opinion, OPC should ask the partners themselves to develop their own performance indicators. This would ensure better relevance of indicators and motivate the partners to use them in their regular project monitoring. Self-evaluation of organizational performance and project implementation should include both qualitative and quantitative indicators.

OPC's existing homepages on Balkan activities seem to be seldom updated. As far as we could see, they contain information that is grossly outdated. If this is the norm, then it is better not to use these pages as a reference to the dynamic situation in the Balkans.

Contact with Swedish embassies varies from nonexistent to very distant. The traditional role as 'ear and eye' for the government in Stockholm is rapidly giving way to a more active involvement in the post-conflict period. This was most evident in the cases of B-H and Croatia. These would clearly benefit from more frequent contact with OPC and information about the activities of their partners.

With a stronger Sida presence in the field, the whole dynamics of Swedish aid machinery will change. One important aspect is the need for communication between Swedish actors on the ground. Another is how to handle information sharing and coordination of comprehensive Swedish support programmes with the many international, government and NGO actors involved. More frequent communication is a natural response to this challenge. Much could probably be achieved simply by courtesy calls when OPC personnel visit the area.

If we should sum up our discussions with OPC partners, the extract may look like this:

*Throughout all these years when we have collaborated with OPC, we have also from time to time had contact with representatives from Sida and the Swedish embassy. In general, Sida used to have a quite limited understanding, but they improved considerably after they started to go on field visits. Also government officials from Sweden have shown greater understanding lately, whether visiting the area from the embassy or on direct visits from Stockholm.*

*However, the quality in the communication with OPC is better because we have a common vision to focus on. That is why we would like to see that it gets an even stronger position as a donor. The embassy and the government are often caught up in political dilemmas. Therefore they should concentrate on reconstruction of physical infrastructure, repair houses and assist refugees and others who need humanitarian assistance, while OPC and other NGOs should look after the civil society.*

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## **6.1 Appropriateness of OPC's activities**

How did OPC and grant/contract recipients explore the appropriateness of the proposed action under the local circumstances? In expert circles, including people from the donor community, there is broad consensus that nothing can replace broad contextual knowledge and analysis of the complex web of reasons behind a conflict as an absolute requirement for making relevant peace initiatives. Is there any evidence that OPC has had this ability when identifying capable partners and developing their projects?

It seems that OPC has been able to draw on a wide network of personal contacts in the local area. This personal interface is probably the combined result of individuals in the organization and the organizational ties between OPC, their member organizations in Sweden and their cooperating partners and contacts. This facilitates a triangularization, where new initiatives can be scrutinized from different angles. Political-party connections, international labour networks and personal contacts from frequent travel ensure that OPC can draw on a variety of different sources.

## 6.2 Coherence of activities

The time available in each place was too little for us to verify whether there are links between the activity in question and others working in the same context. Neither could we with any degree of precision assess the internal strategic coherence of the actions themselves. What we can say is that an informal network has emerged between some of the OPC partners across the territory of the former Yugoslavia. For some organizations, this is a matter of reconnecting broken personal relationships; for others, and for younger people, it is question of developing new ties. Our impression was that this process had come a long way between the entities in B-H, and somewhat shorter across the new international borders. Not surprisingly, such bonds are still negligible between partners in Kosovo and other parts of the former Yugoslavia.

We can also confirm that OPC is conscious about the need to create links and avoid overlap with other activities. There seems to be consistency between Sida's overall policies, OPC's general goals, pre-feasibility studies, project goals and implementing strategies. The problem does not seem to lie on the logical level, but rather on different personal interpretations of what this means among individuals working in the administrative system.

## 6.3 Connectedness of activities

The term 'sustainability' has for long been a stumbling block in the aid industry. From being mainly an economic term, it has also gradually absorbed other important aspects, such as institutional sustainability, cultural sustainability, environmental sustainability, etc. However, it is still often transferred uncritically from long-term development work to democracy support and human rights activities. In the Inception Report, a caution was therefore made against applying the concept in a narrow sense, and it was rather argued that an activity can have a lasting impact without needing to be sustained.

In Sida application forms for NGOs seeking support from the peace programme, the conventional term of sustainability is applied. At least we have seen traces to the contrary. This may create an illusion that third-sector development can produce the same proofs of sustainability whether the activities are community development, infrastructure projects or democracy and human rights activities. In a conflict area, where the very same institution – the state – that normally guarantees sustainable development of the sector is itself part of the conflict, one cannot expect that conditions will be favourable for sustainable development.

None of the organizations we visited are sustainable if foreign funding should stop. Such sustainability could only come about as a result of a normalization process linked to (i) general economic improvement in the society and (ii) restoring government institutions that are able to collect taxes and redistribute funds to altruistic activities. In the meantime, local NGOs may train and prepare themselves for the day when normal fundraising activities will be a sensible activity. However, again we will warn against the expectation that those organizations and activities that are now supported by Sida's peace programme will be among the first ones to achieve such goals. On the contrary, the less such organizations need foreign support, the more their peacebuilding job has already been completed.

Independent media may be a special case. They are at the same time both actors with something to sell in a commercial market as well as value-based organizations indispensable to the promotion of democratic development. For such institutions, business plans and modern media and marketing management can do much to reduce dependency on foreign funding, even when the local economy is in shackles. In these cases, it can sometimes also be difficult to draw the line between what is

NGO and what is business activity. However, this was not the case with the only media institution we visited – a highly respected biweekly journal that is more a kind of magazine and intellectual reference point for other writers and journalists than a hot-selling boulevard product.

The issue of local ownership is more relevant. How to broaden and deepen the local ownership of the peacebuilding process? OPC partners vary considerably in terms of their emphasis on internal participatory decisionmaking and leadership style. With a historical legacy of authoritarian organizational behaviour, anything else would have been highly surprising. Thus, our yardstick has been the degree of ownership over the activities and the empowerment of those involved. Only a longitudinal study can document such changes over time. With our diacronic perception we can only say that giving support on local premises and showing trust in the implementing partner has earned OPC a high reputation as a real partner, not only a donor.

## **6.4 Gender equality activities**

Gender equality activities are particularly relevant in the conflict context, given the degree to which images of self-identity, modes of communicating, models of organization and traditions of participation are at stake in most violent conflicts. In B-H and Croatia, people said that important changes in gender equality were noticeable – in the number of women's organizations and the number of women active in NGO activities. Among OPC's partners are both those that target activities directly towards women and others that have gender as a cross-cutting issues in all activities. However, much is still dependent on the attitudes of single individuals. OPC policy is 'low key', e.g. to keep up the pressure against traditional male attitudes and support such changes wherever possible, not to force gender activities on partners.

## **6.5 Flexibility**

Flexibility was mentioned by almost everyone as one of the strongest positive qualities of OPC. The framework agreement between Sida and OPC gives the latter a certain degree of autonomy in project management. Only major changes need to be authorized by Sida. In practice, this seems to work smoothly and fast. In some cases, where projects had to be changed due to the war situation, the dialogue between OPC and Sida on altering goals and introducing new activities took place in an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding.

Another element that contributes much to the speed of communication and to fast solutions is the transparency of the Swedish aid bureaucracy. One important quality of this is the delegation of decisionmaking power to individuals on both sides who know each other well from a long period of cooperation. In contrast with many other aid bureaucracies, Sida decisionmakers are accessible and have clear instructions as to how far their administrative mandates go. This makes it possible to settle most issues quickly, either by phone, through e-mail or with a meeting called on short notice.

A deeper explanation is, of course, that this cooperation is part of an ongoing dialogue based on a well-established tradition of cooperation and mutual confidence between the state and NGOs in Sweden. How can OPC be supported 100% if it is not part of the government? This is something that partners often have great difficulties understanding.

## **6.6 Location(s) of responsibility**

There is an explicit division of labour between Sida and OPC and between OPC and cooperating partners. Usually these lines are well respected. In recent cases where OPC has taken corrective action

against partners, this has either been because of mismanagement of funds, loss of motivation among key individuals or where an organization has fulfilled their original objectives and not been able on its own to redefine the direction forward. Actions seem to be taken when monitoring has reached a certain point. In such a situation, the most powerful means that OPC has is to act in full openness and inform everybody, including other donors, about the reasons for terminating the support.

## **6.7 Pressure for success/possibility of failure**

Other evaluations of peace support projects have concluded that a refusal to accept failure implies an unwillingness to act. OPC's basic philosophy is to have trust in its partners. This value basis is communicated openly when new partnerships are established: Assessments that take place during that period are largely informal and based on OPC's previous experience with such partnerships. Once the decision is made, the partner is entrusted with wide power over how the support shall be spent and progress/lack of progress on implementation reported back. In OPC's view, this is the best way to avoid a situation in which reports from the field paint a glorified picture of the actual situation.

According to OPC's experience, personal communication is normally enough to ensure that funds are used on what they are intended for. However, it is also acknowledged that one can never completely avoid the possibility that individuals may abuse this trust. This acceptance seems well integrated into OPC's organizational culture, both in the sense that such risks are frequently talked about and in that the organizational attitude is more focused on learning from previous mistakes than on avoiding making mistakes and/or stigmatizing those who made them.

When partnerships from time to time are broken, this normally follows a period when signals from the field have increasingly indicated that something is wrong. There have been cases where individuals have consistently continued to use funds for other activities than was intended, despite repeated warnings. In other cases, partners simply 'burned out' and lost their previous dynamic. There have also been internal personal problems linked to conflicts between generations.

Expectations for results set in project proposals, contracts and reports appear to be realistic. But it should be added that this is partly true because the level of sophistication on such measurements has remained fairly low.

## **6.8 Institutional competence/staff base**

Has OPC's experience in peace support projects lead to the development of institutional competence in this area of activity? This is a hard question that can only be answered tentatively. A proper answer requires a much more comprehensive investigation. Our impression, however, is that the human factor is crucial. Much depends on the personal qualities and experiences of those involved. A sudden change of personnel in OPC would have a strong impact on the whole programme. This vulnerability has been slightly reduced with the recent strengthening of the desk with one more person.

OPC's focus in the Western Balkans has been more on strengthening the level of activities than on developing strong organizations. But that also means that traditional attitudes – such as paternalistic and authoritarian organizational behaviour – continue among partners. Frequently we observed that old male decisionmakers seemed afraid to open up and include women and youngsters. This is of course rooted in a deep cultural value system that can only be changed over time, but we noticed that OPC also emphasizes vis a vis the partners that letting other and younger people in does not mean that the old people should be excluded.

## 7. Recommendations

The NGO community in the Balkans is a complex mix of different organizations working for different purposes, with different legitimacy, professionalism and approaches. Before any changes to the existing policy on peace support, Sida should clarify what is meant by civil society and do a thorough NGO sector analysis in each country. Such studies ought to include descriptions of the strategic importance of the sector and the specific roles performed by organizations belonging to the category of peace, human rights and democracy activist groups.

We support the new draft strategy for Swedish development support to B-H, which gives continued high priority for such efforts, including the channels through Swedish NGOs, OHR, OSCE and UNMIBH. We also agree that the focus of existing policy should be changed towards increased capacity building for local partner organizations, partly through restructuring of their internal abilities, with more weight on management, staff training, regional networking and local fundraising, and partly on creating a political and institutional environment more conducive to their work.

OPC has a good conceptual understanding of civil society and of the ways in which in practice it contributes to peace and reconciliation in the Western Balkans. However, it is a weakness that this understanding is by and large intuitively perceived by individuals in the organization, only implicit in project documents and not analysed at all in OPC's main policy paper. Consequently, a pure desk study of OPC would have left us with a strong impression that there was a gap between the lofty rhetoric on support for democracy and peace and the actual activities. Luckily, we were able to combine the document study with field visits that provided ample evidence of the quality of the practical work.

In our view, the political nature and the long-term thinking in OPC's work cannot be emphasized strongly enough. In Sida, this should be acknowledged and appreciated rather than be a matter of concern. A step in this direction would be to increase OPC's information sharing with Sida and the Foreign Affairs structures.

However, some improvements in OPC's internal working methods are needed in order to deal with so many partners. In general, PBCM projects are very labour intensive. Improved monitoring and evaluation should be given priority. This should be based as much as possible on self-evaluation of performance indicators designed by the partners themselves.

More networking is strongly recommended. In the Western Balkans, the partners of OPC have a largely unexplored potential for interesting joint projects. In addition, OPC's member basis in Sweden is a resource that is hardly seen from the partner perspective. We would therefore recommend that OPC take actions to increase knowledge about its own organization, for instance by inviting partners to Sweden. This may also stimulate thinking in projects that need more intellectual inputs from international debate, for instance more feminist impulses in some traditional women's projects.

OPC, like the Swedish Helsinki Committee, has decided to manage its projects from Stockholm by increasing resources for travel and professional short-term assistance by people from abroad. Other Swedish NGOs, such as Kvinna til Kvinna, have decided to set up field offices. Rather than giving up their so-called 'Närvaroprojekt' and replacing it with conventional field offices, we would recommend OPC to reflect more on how its present model can be strengthened on its own premises.

OPC's partners are divided over whether they think OPC should have its own staff present in the field on a permanent basis. At least in some cases, this wish was expressed quite strongly. There seems to be a need to have the donor around in polarized and unstable situations, such as in Kosovo. Where the general situation is more calm and partners have had time to develop their own capacity, they generally seemed quite happy with the existing system of 'närvaro'.

## 8. Annexes

### 8.1 Annex 1: People met

#### In Kosovo

Albanian Centre for Human Rights: Kozara Kati

Kosova Civil Society Foundation: Lulzim Peci and Agon Demjahi (by mail)

Humanitarian Law Fund: Duska Anastasijevic

#### In Macedonia

Centre for Multicultural Understanding and Cooperation: Kim Mehmeti

Union of Macedonian Women: Savka Todorovska and...

Former government spokesman: Zoran Ivanov

Norwegian Embassy: Vibeke Lilloe (Chargé d'affaires a.i.)

Swedish International Development Cooperation: Biljana Džartova Petrovska (Assistant Programme Officer)

#### In Serbia

Swedish Embassy: Slavica Markovic-Sandic (Cultural, Information And Press Affair Officer)

Humanitarian Law Centre: Natasha Kandic and Budimir Ivanisevic

*Republika*: Nebojsa Popov (Editor-In-Chief)

Centre for Development of Non-Profit Sector: Zarko Paunovic

Open University: Bosko Kovacevic, Tereza Horvat Skenderovic and Dusan Torbica

#### In Croatia

Centre for Peace and Human Rights in Baranja: Gordana Stojanovic

Centre for Peace Studies: Vesna Tezelic (Director)

Swedish Embassy: Ingemar Børjesson (Ambassador), Karin Hernmarck and Andrea Kocijan

Centre for Education and Counselling of Women (CESI): Gordana Obradovic-Dregisic

#### In Bosnia-Herzegovina

Tuzla Forum of Citizens: Vehid Šehić (President)

Norwegian Embassy: Solve Steinhovden (Counsellor)

Swedish Embassy: Peter Swartling (First Secretary)

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights: Madeleine Rees (Head of Office)

Forum for Democratic Alternatives: Sejfudin Tokić

Helsinki Citizens Assembly: Lidija Zivanovic and Aleksandra Petric

OHR: Milburn Line (Return and Reconstruction Task Force)

OCSE: Livio Sarandrea (Human Rights Officer) and Giulio Zanni (Demo Officer and Media Officer)

CARE International: John Crownover, Annette Bull and Eirik Jarl Trondsen (CARE Norge)

## **8.2 Annex 2: Literature**

### **Sida documents:**

‘Strategy for Conflict Management and Peace Building’ (May 1999)

‘Sida’s Evaluation Policy’ (September 1999)

‘Sammanställning av konfliktförebyggande och fredsbyggande instanser på Sida 1998–99’ (working paper, 1999)

‘Building Peace in the Western Balkans: Swedish Development Cooperation for Reconciliation and Reconstruction – Sweden’s Assistance to Bosnia-Herzegovina: A Study of Aid Management and Related Policy Issues’ (Sida Evaluation 99/24)

‘Semi-Annual Report on Bosnia-Herzegovina’ (October 98–March 99) and ‘Strategy for Swedish development cooperation with Bosnia-Herzegovina 2000–2002’ (Draft)

Guidelines to NGOs Regarding Sida Support to Democracy and Human Rights in Ex-Yugoslavia (May 1997 – now under revision).

Various internal Sida documents regarding applications from OPC

Correspondence between Sida and OPC

Olof Palme Centre documents:

Main annual reports from 1998 and 1999

Frame application for year 2000

## **8.3 Annex 3: Main points from our discussions with OPC’s partner organizations and Sida**

In this annex, we do not intend to give a full presentation of each organization. Readers who need such information are referred to OPC or directly to the organizations themselves through their own homepages on the Internet. Nor is it considered relevant to present detailed summaries of our meetings with representatives of Sida or personnel working in the Swedish embassies. Here, we will only present some basic facts and notes from our visit to each one of them.

### **8.3.1 Kosovo Civil Society Foundation (KCSF – code 700 52 J)**

The foundation was started in 1998 as an NGO centre, with OPC as one of the original donors. However, the office was completely destroyed during the war. Thanks to support from the European Council it was re-established under its present name as early as August 1999. The board has been functional since December last year; so far only with Albanian board members, but representatives from minority groups, including Serbs, are considered.

OPC’s support for 1998 and 1999 was approximately 300,000 SEK each year.

In the first period (phase I temporarily stopped by the war), priority was given to organizing seminars for local NGOs, arranging a conference on Kosovo civil society and publicizing a local NGO directory. KCSF also contributed to the UNMIK law on NGO registration. An anthology with analysis of the future development of civil society in Kosovo is currently under preparation.

The second area of activities has been the awarding of grants to projects from local NGOs for a period of one to six months. This is presently being monitored before the next round is launched. Financial reporting is based on EU requirements.

In phases II and III, training for trainers in managerial skills and educational activities directed towards the needs of these new NGOs are on the agenda.

KCSF wants a long-term cooperation with OPC, particularly in the field of conflict resolution and conflict management. Such cooperation is vital in order to be able to work systematically with strategic issues, e.g. how to define 'civil society' in the Kosovo context. So far, the contact has been OK, but the next phase, according to the KCSF leadership, will require a different approach and a different kind of partnership. More frequent donor contact is necessary for the dialogue to develop in the immediate future. A visit by KCSF staff to Stockholm, followed by an OPC delegation to Kosovo, was suggested as a useful step in this direction. KCSF has no homepage so far.

### **8.3.2 Centre for Multiculturalism and Understanding (SMUC – code 700 24 J, 48 J and J 49)**

The cooperation with OPC goes back to 1992/93, when neither legal nor commercial links existed between Macedonia and other countries. This long relationship has forged its quality.

In 1998, OPC supported three projects: (i) support to political youth groups in summer camps, with 250,000 SEK; (ii) seminars on health and democracy among rural women in Western Macedonia, with 140,000 SEK; and (iii) the establishment of a mini-school in the same area and running bilingual training courses in gender and democracy, supported with another 140,000 SEK.

In 1999, the summer school was again supported with 250,000 SEK, and two seminars for rural women, with 220,000 SEK. The third project was not successful and was stopped.

OPC was commended for its holistic perspective on regional problems. Frequent personal visits have secured the close contact. Joint understanding of the role of NGO advocacy as distinguished from humanitarian assistance has also facilitated good communication. The relationship was tested and grew even stronger when problems occurred with the mini-school in Western Macedonia, which was finally dropped by consensus. SMUC has no homepage so far.

### **8.3.3 Union of Macedonian Women (UWOM – code 700 50 J)**

This is an umbrella organization, established in 1994. From a modest start of 13 members, it today covers more than 50 women's organizations of different kinds and ethnic composition all over Macedonia. While each organization has its own mandate and programmes, the Union operates a joint women's centre in Skopje, where the Women's Studies programme supported by OPC is also localized.

The overall goal of this project was to develop a one-year programme for gender studies. In order to achieve this, a centre was needed with space for training, educational and administrative facilities and a small library. Later, documentation and information work have been added. OPC was instrumental in realizing the idea by providing the initial funds.

The first year of support was in 1998, with 140,000 SEK; and in 1999, support was 190,000 SEK. The funds have been used for set-up costs and organizational running.

According to our informants, the idea would never have materialized if it had not been for the real partnership that already existed with OPC. When the initiative was first presented, OPC reacted immediately with a positive response. Its knowledge of the situation for women in Macedonia and the personal empathy from donor staff in Stockholm was of great importance in facilitating the implementation process.

The Women's Centre is geared towards changing the traditional gender division and to building a platform for future multidisciplinary women's studies in Macedonia. Most of the people working here are volunteers; only a coordinator and two assistants are paid staff.

The target group is people in women's organizations and political parties. So far, this has included involvement in peace conferences, help to refugees from Kosovo, street children projects and information about the problem of prostitution. The latter is a regional problem, and cooperation is thus sought with neighbouring countries. A programme for improvement of the situation for rural women is also developed through practical training and new local employment opportunities. Finally, the centre is involved in organizational development of their members, such as training in project management and fundraising. UWOM has no homepage so far.

#### **8.3.4 Humanitarian Law Fund (HLF – code 700 51 J)**

HLF is a centre of legal experts. Its headquarters are in Belgrade, while a large part of the activities have focused on the situation in Kosovo, where human rights activities have continued from field offices in Pristina, Pec and Jakova. It was the only organization from Serbia that remained in Kosovo and continued reporting about human rights violations during the war.

As an eyewitness on the scene in Kosovo, the organization has been a major force in breaking Serbian taboos regarding atrocities committed by regular and paramilitary forces. Their documents have wide international circulation. Due to its high international profile in the area of human rights crime, the Serbian regime has so far hesitated to clamp down on its activities.

OPC's first grant of 200,000 SEK in 1998 was in order to realize the idea of an international conference on the Hague War Tribunal inside FRY to counteract stereotypes and stimulate public awareness about war crimes addressed by the tribunal. The conference took place in Belgrade in November same year with a large group of international experts and observers from all over the former Yugoslavia, Europe and the USA. Another planned conference to increase local awareness about the work of the International War Tribunal on the Kosovo war crimes was postponed in 1999 and is scheduled for this year.

In 1999, OPC supported HLF's field office in Pristina with 490,000 SEK. This went mainly to core funding, in order to extend local administrative capacity and recruit more professional staff to match the increases in human rights violations in Kosovo and beyond, where refugees fled during the crisis.

Under the circumstances prevailing in Kosovo and Serbia in 1999, it was extremely difficult for HLF to operate with full transparency about foreign support, not least in financial matters. For this reason, support for activities in Kosovo was tightly controlled from the Belgrade headquarters. This willingness to accept a very centralized and personalized management style has earned OPC a high score in HLF as a good donor. OPC was commended for its willingness and ability to be open and for its flexibility in its support.

HLF's homepage is at [www.hlc.org.yu](http://www.hlc.org.yu).

#### **8.3.5 Republika (Code 700 17 J)**

More than 1500 journalists and authors have had their texts published in this biweekly Belgrade newspaper since its start in 1989. At any time, between 200–300 writers are connected to the paper, which has a circulation of approximately 6,000 copies, of which some 2,000 are distributed to other parts of FRY and abroad. In the last four years, every new edition has also been available on the web.

Articles from the newspaper are regularly reprinted in other FRY media, as well as in Poland. More than 50 publications have also been published. Special inserts are regularly made and circulated to target groups, such as politicians in towns governed by the opposition, students, etc. Among its intellectual audience. *Republika* is considered a channel for public discourse aimed towards critical reflection. It is free of simplistic language and propaganda.

Some uncertainty seemed to exist about why Swedish support came through OPC. Applications are simple and reporting is limited to the annual report.

OPC's support in 1998 went to a project that documented the role of free media in FRY. The goal was to compare the working conditions for professional media under the Milosevic regime with conditions under previous regimes and thereby contribute to hopefully improving the situation. Various articles on this issue were published in *Republika* throughout the year and later published in an anthology. The book raised a public debate about the situation for people working in the media. The total support was 220,000 SEK.

OPC supported a similar project in 1999. Then the aim was to focus on the humanistic culture of the Serbian nation as a counterweight to the nationalist propaganda. However, the events in spring this year changed the topic of the articles somewhat, and the book project was finally published under the title *Violation of Civilian Rights in Serbia*.

The cooperation with OPC is considered serious and relaxed. It is placed in a special donor category, together with the German Heinrich Böll Stiftung and the Dutch Press Now Foundation. A major reason for this is that these are all perceived to be intellectual foundations with a value basis similar to that of *Republika* and with high intellectual and moral standards. For the same reason, other potential donors with less common ethical ground have been turned down. Particularly appreciated is the fact that the three donors above have never asked for favours in return.

*Republika's* home page is at [www.yuope.com/zines/republika](http://www.yuope.com/zines/republika).

### **8.3.6 Centre for Development of Non-Profit Sector (CRNPS – code 700 57 J)**

The organization was established late in 1996 and became operational early in 1997. Its main purpose is to stimulate the growth of a modern civic society throughout Serbia and beyond. It is a service centre for local NGOs, where they can call or come to have information, training and consultations. The centre has become the EU's official partner in Serbia.

In 1999, OPC gave 110,000 SEK to CRNPS. The planned support was for two seminars, in Kraguljevac and Novi Pazar, for local NGOs from Central Serbia and Sandzak. The idea was to bring together people from new NGOs in these areas of Serbia, where civil society is very little developed, in order to motivate and improve their knowledge of the roles and functions of NGOs in a democratic society. The organizations were also to present themselves and their long-term development plans.

For obvious reasons, this event did not take place. After the bombing stopped, a reallocation of the grant was done in favour of support to the second NGO Forum meeting in FRY, arranged in Subotica in the autumn.

According to our informants OPC's quality as a donor is that it combines a good understanding of local circumstances, clear requirements regarding the cooperation and frequent communication, including personnel visits. Applications procedures are also simple and even in local languages. In addition, OPC provides its partners with useful personnel contacts and organizational connections. Compared with other donors, OPC is more flexible and closer to practising real partnership.

CRNPS's homepage is at [www.crnps.org.yu](http://www.crnps.org.yu).

### **8.3.7 Open University (code 700 55 J, 56 J and 57J)**

The institution, located in Subotica, has a history of more than ten years of addressing vocational training, adult education and a wide range of different public activities. It is a major force in civil sector development and has made significant contributions to expanding open spaces for discussions about the role of civil society in Vojvodina. Activities span from open lectures and tribunals to exhibitions, conferences and expert meetings. It also provides logistical support to local NGOs.

OPC is a relative newcomer among its foreign supporters, starting its cooperation at the beginning of 1999. Unfortunately, the first funded project for an international conference on the rights of minorities to maintain their identity was dropped because of NATO bombing, and the institution was temporarily closed.

When activities resumed during the summer, the profile of the institution was adjusted to take account of new circumstances. Ethnic tensions in multicultural Vojvodina had risen, and there was a need to reduce these tensions. At the same time, it was not then possible to organize an international conference. Open University therefore addressed OPC and asked for permission to arrange a series of eight public meetings about important issues for Vojvodina, such as manipulation of ethnic identity, minority rights, ethnic economy, cultural and political autonomy.

With consent from Sida, three new projects were supported. 125,000 SEK was given to the activities mentioned above. Another 135,000 SEK was given to a regional twinning project between institutions and organizations in four cities in four countries of the former Yugoslavia – Subotica, Osijek, Tuzla and Ohrid. This cooperation focuses on culture, media and information with the purpose to develop new civic initiatives. And finally, 110,000 SEK went to a project on who the creators of public opinion are in Vojvodina. All of these project ideas originated within the Open University network, but were developed in close dialogue with OPC. The last two projects were sequenced into several phases and have continued into the year 2000.

OU wants OPC as a long-term partner to help develop its international network and institutionalize these contacts. The board of directors decides about going into new partnerships. Once a project is approved, the recurrent communication with donors is delegated to the coordinator for each project.

OU's homepage is at [www.openunsubotica.co.yu](http://www.openunsubotica.co.yu).

### **8.3.8 Centre for Peace and Human Rights in Baranje (Code 700 47 J)**

The centre was established in 1994 under the protection of UNPROFOR in Eastern Slavonia. It started as a local initiative directed towards women on the Serb side of the old frontline north of Osijek. Originally, 80% of the village's inhabitants were Croats, and the rest Serbs and Hungarians. However, most Croats fled during the fighting. Thus, between 1991 and 1997, almost 90% of the inhabitants were Serb refugees from other parts of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

In the beginning, activities were quite simple. Practice started before 'theory'. However, gradually the centre opened up a wider space for communication between people who had remained in the community as well as returnees from the war in 1991/92. The local reconciliation process has focused on practical activities where both sides have realized that they have many common interests.

There was a down period in 1998 when almost no people came to the centre. Serbs left together with the UN administration and local Croat authorities took over. However, due to coincidences that the centre was able to utilize, activities resumed and later expanded with financial support from several donors.

A first visit by OPC delegation to Baranje in 1998 resulted in a PC project. This has brought many people from the two ethnic groups together and slowly encouraged them to speak to each other. The computer education may also lead to regional cooperation with Forum in Tuzla, which offers internationally recognized computer certificates.

OPC's support in 1998 was 100,000 SEK to educational activities through training workshops in nonviolent communication, such as Giraff language, in how to arrange 'friendly class rooms', as well as computer training. Conflict management and computer training continued with Swedish support of 135,000 SEK in 1999, and the cooperation continues in 2000. A significant part of the target group is young people.

The centre has mixed experiences with international donors. 'Some have excessive demands in return for their support and leave us with a feeling of being exploited', said our interviewee. 'OPC's knowledge, attitude and practice make it a very different donor. They understand our needs, including core funding, and are not as demanding as most other donors when it comes to reporting.'

The centre's homepage is at [www.members.xoom.com/baranja](http://www.members.xoom.com/baranja).

### **8.3.9 Forum of Tuzla Citizens (Code 700 22)**

Forum was established in 1994 as an initiative to create a counterweight to nationalistic politics in B-H. It is an important actor on the NGO scene and has for several years played a strong advocacy role for civil interests. It has connections to key political figures. The citizen assembly helps to bring together civic groups from all over B-H to discuss common issues. The forum has demonstrated knowledge and capability to interact successfully with foreign donors and is a link between local groups and a wider international audience, including OPC and the Swedish Social Democratic Party.

Forum supervises local community-based organizations. It also enjoys support from the FAR programme for cooperation with other Bosnian NGOs.

Personal relations with OPC were created early during the war. The difficult circumstances at that time probably contributed to this. 'Our dialogue has always been good', said our contact person, 'even when we have different opinions on other local OPC partners.'

OPC support of 250,000 SEK in 1998 was for four round table conferences on key political issues, supplemented by other ad hoc seminars. In 1999, it has continued the support to similar activities, with active use of media presentation and the Internet.

According to our interviewee, continuity in donor relations is very important. This has facilitated cooperation with other OPC partners, such as the one in Baranje. Cross-border cooperation between organizations in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia is still a bit sensitive. It is therefore positive when this can happen naturally through a bottom-up approach. This has probably been OPC's most important contribution to Forum, we were told.

The forum often functions as a consultative body when OPC assesses whether to enter into cooperation with new partners. Together with other donors from Scandinavian countries, OPC is praised for being a clean collaborating partner, seldom applying pressure and conditionality.

The forum's homepage is at [www.forumtz.com](http://www.forumtz.com).

### 8.3.10 Forum of Democratic Alternative (code 700 21)

The FDA has 12 member organizations and receives financial support from about eight international donors. OPC is the oldest of them, being there right from the start in 1995. The overall goal was that Bosnia-Herzegovina should survive as an independent multi-ethnic, multicultural and multi-cultural state and develop in the direction of modern European states. More specifically, FDA wanted to establish and improve the permanent contact between democratic forces in Republika Srpska and the Federation through a variety of different working methods. This included cooperation between members of parliament, political parties, independent media and individuals hoping to be members of a 'shadow opposition' to the existing nationalistic parties.

FDA has, on a broad basis, addressed itself to civic organizations, independent media, and members and supporters of non-nationalistic parties. The working method has been public discourse – through communication and cooperation directly between individuals and organizations, through roundtable meetings, tribunes and other public events and through printed and electronic materials.

FDA has had a considerable impact on the public debate in B-H, even in the Federal Parliament, and has influenced the development of public laws, school and curriculum reforms, election rules and procedures and on the discussion on B-H foreign policy orientation. It has also been considerably involved in discussions around repatriation and the need for reconciliation. FDA works in tandem with representatives from the International Community as well as local NGOs. Today, the total activity is shared between four offices in Sarajevo, Livno, Banja Luka and Bijeljina.

OPC's support in 1998 and 1999 was 300,000 SEK each year. This went to general organizational support and to specific activities such as printed material, roundtables and expert meetings between NGO representatives, technical and legal experts, politicians and journalists.

Our informant said he is very impressed by OPC's ability to think about reconciliation in a long-term perspective and abstain from expecting short-term results. In the past, much focus was on the problems, and the actors were framed too much in political interests. Now, the time is ready to focus more on the interests of civil society itself, through building strong associations, making interlinkages between them and demanding from the state a positive legal, economic and cultural frame.

OPC is a major partner, not so much in terms of finance but in terms of joint understanding. OPC's type of financial contribution is also special, since most of the support goes into core funding. Frequent communication, continuity and joint approach are key words in explaining this. In addition, OPC is interested in *process*, while most donors are mainly concerned with measurable *political effects*.

Although many of the 'bad guys' are leaving, or already have left, the public scene, IC should not make the mistake of overlooking the deeper structural problems that are still there, for example the strong collective tradition with its authoritarian leadership ideals.

Individual motivation is part of this problem complex. It is hard to motivate people to take up personal responsibility for public problems. And it is even harder to encourage people to express themselves publicly on such issues unless they wrap their personal opinions into some kind of collective interests.

This means that FDA in the future will be more strongly oriented towards social issues such as curriculum in the school system, the rights of old people to have their pensions, social regulation and labour regulations, etc. and the finding of practical solutions to these often ignored problems.

FDA's homepage is at [www.bosnia-fda.org](http://www.bosnia-fda.org)

### **8.3.11 Helsinki Citizens Assembly (Code 700 35 J)**

The organization was formed by a group of local activists in Banja Luka in 1996, with the purpose of linking civic initiatives in RS with similar groups in the Federation and abroad. The HCA has offices in Banja Luka, Sarajevo and Tuzla. Their mission is to raise the level of consciousness about civil, human and social rights, and political culture and tolerance by mobilizing people, especially women and youth, for participation in community work and democratic initiatives.

The organization has a strong grassroots orientation. It works at peace and integration from below. This is reflected in the practical approach for training in peacebuilding. HCA organizes public tribunals for women and runs a youth network for B-H, organizing cultural festivals and workshops in nonviolent communication, conflict resolution, gender equality and human rights for youth leaders. According to our informants, there was more goodwill than knowledge in the beginning, but HCA has worked hard to integrate knowledge from both activist and academic traditions.

The organization receives support from Kvinna til Kvinna for its gender work. This amounts to almost 50% of the total budget. OPC came in later and supports the youth network project. OPC provides organizational development to community-based youth groups. Today, that network counts more than 100 groups. HCA assists them in developing their activities and trains them in how to make activity plans, motivate people and connect them with similar groups elsewhere through newsletters, magazines and Internet communication. Strategic planning workshops have also been organized.

This is no easy task, since the groups are very heterogeneous. Some of them are registered legal groups, others are more informal. Less than half of the groups are active. It is therefore a success when such groups are able to carry out their plans.

In 1999, OPC gave 200,000 SEK for a youth summer school. The project also included music and theatre festivals and publicity campaigns.

Our informants believe they have been lucky to have donors that understand and appreciate what local capacity building really is. What if donor organizations asked for the same degree of accountability and transparency from their state-to-state relations as they demand from NGOs, they asked. Regarding partnership, this is easier to achieve with Kvinna til Kvinna since it has an office in Bosnia-Herzegovina and regular meetings to discuss the cooperation. Although OPC also has that ability, OPC's practical capacity seems to be less. Regional meetings and better knowledge of OPC is high on HCA's agenda.

Comparing Swedish donors with other Western donors is often like comparing heaven and hell. The latter is a place with no human faces, only papers, guidelines and procedures! The organization does not yet have its own homepage.

### **8.3.12 Centre for Peace Studies (Code 700 62 J)**

The centre was established in 1996 as part of the Anti War Campaign in Croatia. The early activists were soon connected to the international Quaker Peace Service and developed strong ties to Oasis Training Network and other resource centres, such as the peace study centres in Belgrade and Skopje. The overall goal is to establish peace education as an integral part of Croatian education and general culture.

CPS's Peace Building Exchange Programme has included people from all over the former Yugoslavia and from other war-torn societies, such as Ireland and the Middle East. The training course in nonviolent conflict resolution, 'Miramida', has become well known and is now diversified into basic and advanced levels, 'Miramida' for young people and 'Miramida Partnership' for trade unions.

The centre runs three separate programmes: peacebuilding, peace exchange programme and peace studies. The latter is just in its infant stage and will not be in operation before sometime next year.

OPC's goal is to facilitate the relationship between peace studies, peace education and peacebuilding activities in Croatia. The purpose is also to promote the peace culture more generally and to reach out to and encourage individuals who want to work for peace processes in their communities.

OPC's first support was given in 1998. In 1999, the amount was 260,000 SEK, and the cooperation continues. This is directed towards support for a two-term basic educational programme for students, where practical project education is combined with theoretical lectures and in-depth literature studies. The students are a mixed group of peace activists and people without such previous experience.

In the opinion of CPS, sharpening the technocratic means does not necessarily lead to better results. Often, it only leads to stronger external control. What is important is to be close to the projects. The events in the field often happen so fast that it is hard for a donor to catch up. That is why frequent communication and visits are so important. It is not enough to identify new projects and partner organizations. One must also be able to carry out the practical elements of combining money, persons, legal parts and connect it all the practice of peacebuilding. On top of that, one must also be visible in the media, but not necessary by staging big events. This is certainly no easy task!

Well-done practice often boils down to the ability to empower people, to raise their capacity for asking questions and challenging the local power structure as well as the donor. Organizations that claim they are agents of change cannot at the same time be mirrors of old autocratic structures. Participatory decisionmaking, participatory planning, etc. are crucial elements in a deeper change process. Donors who want to play a role in peacebuilding must understand this and encourage their partners to more profound breaks with the past. Such organizations are few, but it is vital to increase their number and their networks of member activists.

Organizations like the Centre for Peace Studies will not be able to survive without long-term core funding. However, for activist organizations, such funding is dangerous and often leads to aid dependency. The organization has no web site so far.

### **8.3.13 Centre for Counselling of Women (CESI – Code 700 46 J)**

CESI is a women's NGO started in 1997 as a response to violation of human rights, in particular with regard to the situation of women and minorities. It is a member of the Women's Network and the Anti War Campaign in Croatia. Its main goals are to empower women through advocacy and to promote women's rights through local initiatives.

OPC first met with representatives of the organization during a field visit in 1997. This resulted in a project called 'Kvinna till Kvinna in Okucani' in 1998. Focus was on changing the social and economic role of women and increasing their participation in public life. Target groups were local girls and women who through so-called 'drop-in groups' were offered education about their basic rights and trained in communication and other practical skills. Also, more regular educational activities in a wide range of topics were included. The project included media activities to broadcast their achievements.

In 1998, the support was 100,000 SEK and, in 1999, 120,000 SEK. Last year, the support went to finance public lectures, round table discussions and coordination meetings of local women's groups.

CESI admitted they had only a fair knowledge of OPC. Regional meetings with other OPC partners as well as a visit to Sweden would therefore be of interest. Contact with the Swedish embassy might be useful, but in their view an embassy is not the best structure to foster confidence people to people.

CESI's homepage is at [www.zamir.net/~cesi/](http://www.zamir.net/~cesi/).

#### **8.3.14 Visits to Sida Representations/Embassies**

Much of our conversations revolved around the division of labour between the different Swedish actors in the peace support programme. The talks also focused on knowledge of and contact with OPC and partners in the region.

There seemed to be broad consensus that it is difficult to manage development aid directly from Stockholm. Sida personnel generally want representatives from Swedish organizations to be more present in the field. This argument sometimes went towards the needs of the projects, at other times towards their own needs to be better informed.

Compared with other bilateral state donors, Sida is not considered to be a very controlling organization but has a reputation for taking its time in proper planning. When Sida staff come on their frequent visits, they usually appear in a friendly manner. However, when emergency occurs, they have shown that they can be both fast and flexible.

Sida involvement varies considerably across the region. In Macedonia, Sida has just arrived and concentrates on humanitarian need assessments and long-term state-to-state cooperation. Two staff members are stationed in Kosovo. Contact with OPC partners had been insignificant.

The Swedish embassy in FRY has no Sida personnel, but a discussion has started. With the expected political changes in the country, this passive role may soon change. There has been no systematic monitoring of what Swedish NGOs do, although in some cases the embassy has been well informed.

In Sarajevo, Sida has a representative in the embassy who monitors the situation on human rights and democracy in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Sida wants to have other Swedish organizations present in order to share information and discuss matters of mutual interest. It is felt that there is a need for closer contact with partners of Swedish NGOs. A minimum is that a copy of reports about implemented projects are sent to the embassy. Contact with OPC or their Bosnian partners are only occasional and could well be strengthened.

In Sida's view, real partnerships are hard to establish in Bosnia. Thus, local Swedish presence is necessary not so much to control as to encourage their local counterparts so that they do not lose motivation and become self-centred. That is why Sida has been critical of OPC's project management model and favoured local representation.

It would also be useful if projects informed more about their specific activity plans and announced places and dates of major events. This would make it easier for the embassy to participate. Some organizations do send invitations to events, but more so would be useful, according to the spokesman.

Sida is well aware that the impact of democracy projects is difficult to assess. Lack of quantifiable indicators also makes measuring effect almost impossible; the best one can do is usually to monitor output. However, NGOs and Sida are both subjected to inspections from the Swedish public auditor, and the auditors often have a strict attitude in these matters.

*Among the Swedish embassies, the one in Croatia was the most critical of OPC's activities. In their view, OPC is less clear in thematic priorities and project selections than other Swedish NGOs. That the projects themselves are OK should not make up for the fact that the organization lacks a coherent strategy based on proper situational analysis. According to this embassy, what is most important now is to address conditions that can stabilize the fragile social peace. In their view, OPC did not seem to take up this challenge seriously enough by, for instance, developing projects together with natural partners such as the Croatian trade unions. Instead OPC is involved in projects in thematic fields where other Swedish partners are more professional.*



## **Annex 2**

### **Case study: Evaluating Sida's Support to Israel/Palestine Center for Research and Information (IPCRI) 1998–1999**

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# 1. Introduction

At the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, major changes in the international, regional and national/internal situations provided a totally new opening for fundamentally new mediation efforts in the explosive Middle East region. These changes came to have major implications for the development of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Throughout the 45 years of the Cold War, US–Soviet rivalry in the Middle East had often made it impossible to undertake a genuine peace process. Global competition was not conducive to regional conflict management, fuelling many regional conflicts, including the one in the Middle East. Then, in 1989, the Cold War was over. The new world order, however, encouraged the great powers to coordinate their efforts in order to mitigate or resolve regional conflicts in ways different from those they had been used to in the past.

The Gulf War in 1991, the most important regional factor, had profound effects on all the actors in the Middle East, fundamentally altering the political landscape of the area and making peace a genuine possibility. However, these international and regional changes would not in themselves have created a context ripe for mediation, had not two other important events on the national/internal side taken place in the same period. The first decisive development concerned the relationship between the PLO and Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. The second event was related to internal political changes in Israel.

The *intifada*, the Palestinian uprising which started in December 1987, challenged the legitimacy of Israel's occupation and drew attention to its costs – both moral and financial. A new international focus was put on the fate of the Palestinian people. It became evident to the whole world that Palestinian nationalism could neither be ignored nor characterized as merely a consequence of PLO propaganda. If the official PLO leadership wanted to maintain its authority after the outbreak of the *intifada*, they simply had to get involved in negotiations or be swept aside by the growing self-confidence of the local Palestinians.

The *intifada* also had an important impact on Israeli political reasoning. The harsher the measures the Israeli government ordered, the stronger the resistance grew. The unsuccessful attempts at crushing the Palestinian revolt had also made a growing majority in Israel realize that a shift in course was necessary. The Israelis needed a stable, friendly government on the West Bank. With the growth of Hamas, the Israeli government felt that only PLO Chairman Yassir Arafat could give them such a regime, the other options being much worse. By 1992, both Israel and the PLO had come to realize that the status quo was untenable and that coercion was not the answer. Reluctantly, the new Labour government in Israel decided to do what had previously been unthinkable – to talk directly with the PLO.

The Madrid Conference, which opened on 30 October 1991, was in a way the direct outcome of the new international, regional and national/internal situation. The conference marked a watershed in the Arab–Israeli conflict, laying the groundwork for the peace process and paving the way for the signing of the Oslo Agreement in September 1993. In the Oslo Agreement, the parties managed to agree on a Declaration of Principles that paved the way for the establishment of the Palestinian Self-Government Authority and mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO. A major turning-point had been reached in Palestinian–Israeli relations.

## 2. Presentation of IPCRI

The new dynamics of the situation and the apparently brighter prospects for achieving a peaceful and sustainable solution to the Middle East conflict intensified all kinds of peace building efforts in many quarters, including Sweden. The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) became involved in various confidence-building projects involving both the Israelis and the Palestinians. According to Sida's own guidelines, Swedish development aid to the West Bank and Gaza ought principally to be given to projects directly or indirectly supporting the peace process.<sup>1</sup> One of these projects, supported by Sida, was the *Israeli/Palestine Centre for Research and Information* (IPCRI), located in Bethlehem on the West Bank, to which Sida provided SEK 2,000,000 in core support in 1998 and 1999.

IPCRI is an independent research and information centre, established in August 1989. This was prior to the new developments in the peace process in the Middle East, prior to the Madrid Conference in 1991 and prior to the Oslo Peace Process of 1993. After the Oslo Agreement was signed in 1993, all kinds of reconciliation work and peacebuilding efforts poured into the region. Working on Israeli–Palestinian peace became fashionable. Organizations and institutions, academic research centres and private sector initiatives, all working on peace, exploded in number. IPCRI, however, was already established and very active. Right from the start, IPCRI was a joint Israeli–Palestinian project. The institute was founded and is still run by the two founding fathers – the Israeli Dr Gershon Baskin and the Palestinian Dr Zakaria al Qaq. This codirection implies an unique cooperation and makes IPCRI special.

In 1998–99 (as in 2000) the activities at IPCRI were organized within 5 departments. Although both the emphasis and the projects have changed slightly – both within the departments and between them – the themes have basically been the same and constitute IPCRI's core activities:

1. *The Strategic Affairs Unit (SAU)* focuses primarily on issues related to the final status negotiations. Through meetings, seminars, workshops and round-table conferences, IPCRI aims to create the highest possible level of consensus. It tries to identify interests and search for political breakthroughs. IPCRI organizes working groups based on the Track 1 ½ model.<sup>2</sup> At these workshops complicated questions are discussed, such as Jerusalem, the future of the Palestinian refugees and issues related to sovereignty and security.
2. *The Peace Intelligence Unit (IPIU)* focuses on gathering information on negotiating strategies being developed by both sides and making that information available to the other side. IPIU prepares policy papers and analyses of the strategies and negotiating tactics. The purpose of IPIU is to help the sides reach the best compromises and agreements possible.
3. *Pathways into Reconciliation (PIR)* is mainly focused on Peace Education through the implementation of what IPCRI describes as the largest existing Israeli–Palestinian–Jordanian peace education curricula and encounter project. The Peace Education Programme was still a pilot project in 1998 and 1999. (In 2000, it will be IPCRI's biggest project and constitute half of IPCRI's budget.) It involves up to 3000 Israeli, Palestinian and Jordanian high-school students and teachers per year.

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<sup>1</sup> Sida 'Bedömningspromemoria' for 1998, p. 3 and 1999, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of Track 2 and Track 1 ½ models, see below.

4. *The Law and Development Unit* focuses on the legal dimensions of Israeli–Palestinian (and regional) relations both in commercial law reform, harmonization of law and regulations and in the development of civil society. In 1998–99 the commercial law section focused on the harmonization of regional health as well as quality standards for fresh agricultural products, while the emphasis of the civil society section lay in the democratization of the peace process, concentrating on how the impact of the peace process would influence the lives of the people living in the region. Palestinian refugees and Jerusalem have been essential topics here.
5. *The Water and Environment (W&E)* department’s main activities include cooperative work in the field of environmental health: dioxins, lead emissions, hazardous waste, and the overuse and misuse of the pesticides. In addition, this department is working with the official bodies responsible for nature reserves and for the prevention of chemical accidents. Among many other projects, IPCRI has also begun a training programme in environmental conflict resolution.

Some of these programmes and projects – for instance, the Water and Environment unit and the Peace Education Programme – have programme directors. Many of IPCRI’s other staff are hired on a project-by-project basis because of the nature of IPCRI’s funding. All projects undertaken by IPCRI are jointly managed and jointly staffed by Israelis and Palestinians. The full-time staff numbers 11 people with an additional pool of some 30 freelancers, researchers, interns and volunteers.<sup>3</sup>

### 3. Arguments for choosing IPCRI as a case study

Without doubt, the conflict in the Middle East can be described as a high-profile, complex and extended *type of conflict*.<sup>4</sup> The conflict has been tense, aggressive and has seemed almost insoluble ever since the creation of Israel in 1948. However, since the late 1980s and the early 1990s, the conflict in the Middle East entered a new period. The possibility of a peaceful solution did not seem as far away as it had been in the past. IPCRI may be seen as a legitimate child, born out of both the conflict itself and out of the new ‘go for peace’ attitude (*contemporaneity*).<sup>5</sup>

#### 3.1 Activities and dilemmas

In addition, evaluating IPCRI also met the three other selection criteria. Sida support of IPCRI might easily be seen as a possible support of *Track II interventions*, *a locally based peace process* and *an institutional capacity-building effort*.

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<sup>3</sup> Most of this information is based on IPCRI and Sida documents and reports; for example, see the reports *IPCRI*, probably published mid-1999, and *IPCRI 1988–2000*, which was probably published mid-2000; see also Gershon Baskin, ‘Ten years of IPCRI: History, Lessons and a Look at the Future’, an unpublished report which is more or less identical to the article at their web site: Gershon Baskin & Zakaria al Qaq, ‘The History of IPCRI and Applied Lessons to be Learned from a Joint Share Holder Institute’, February 2000.

<sup>4</sup> Here, I am referring to the selection criteria specifically pointed out in the Inception Report, entitled ‘Study of Sida’s Projects of Conflict Management and Peace Building’, accepted by Sida on 30 June 2000.

<sup>5</sup> Both as regards the criteria of *grant recipient* and *availability of researchers*, IPCRI corresponded with the criteria set out in the Inception Report. Choosing a project in the Middle East also satisfied the criterion of *geographic spread*.

*Track II activities*, broadly speaking, are normally defined as peacemaking efforts that lie outside formal – or Track I diplomacy, ranging from back channel (i.e. officially deniable) negotiations, through forums of leading individuals used by parties as sounding boards for ideas, to citizens' dialogues for building mutual understanding and trust. IPCRI seems to have had such Track II activities under way ever since the establishment of the institution. In fact, such activities seem to be the core of IPCRI's work. According to IPCRI's institutional mandate, the institution is a 'joint Palestinian–Israeli public policy think tank aiming to aid in the development of Israeli–Palestinian peace based on the principles of self-determination, security and prosperity for all Palestinians and Israelis. IPCRI aims at developing public policy options in cooperation for the political leadership of both sides and to create mechanisms for ongoing sustainable cooperation between both peoples'.<sup>6</sup>

In order to achieve this goal, IPCRI – from the very beginning – established three Israeli–Palestinian working groups, one of economists and businesspeople, one of water scientists and one discussing the future of Jerusalem. According to IPCRI Director Baskin, the working groups, and in particular the one on economic issues, had participants who represented some of the most important economic players from both the Palestinian and Israeli side. Baskin claims that 'IPCRI had successfully created joint forums that were safe and secure for establishment Israeli and Palestinians to begin to learn about each other's positions and to begin to develop new ideas for creating peace between them'.<sup>7</sup> The atmosphere inside the working groups seemed to have been an open and frank one. In addition, the discussions and results from the working group on economic questions were directly used in the formal Track I negotiations on economic questions between Israel and the PLO in Paris during 1994. IPCRI at this point fulfilled its own aim, and the important Track II element, when results from the working group had a direct effect on the ongoing peace process. IPCRI itself, however, prefers to characterize these activities as Track 1 ½ interventions. The reason for using this term is that the people participating in the activities also sit at the negotiating tables, representing the Israelis or the Palestinians. As IPCRI sees it, the ideas and the results coming out of the various seminars, round-tables or deniable low-profile or secret meetings are directly brought to the negotiating table by the parties themselves. The people are the same, but they are participating in different capacities.<sup>8</sup>

From 1990 and onwards, Director Baskin also was invited to the Research Department in the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs to give briefings on the ideas, discussions and papers being presented and developed at IPCRI. Such briefing meetings were also held with Palestinian officials. The briefings also fulfilled IPCRI's goals – and satisfied Sida's criteria for giving support. The briefing meetings gave IPCRI direct access and an ability to influence the official decisionmaking process. After the change of government in Israel in 1992, such briefing meetings became more regular and were held with the Prime Minister's office and other ministries. The element of deniability, which often characterizes Track II initiatives and processes, had by then disappeared. Before 1992, it had obviously been important for the officials from the Foreign Ministry to state that 'meetings had not taken place' and 'papers had not been received'. After 1992, the atmosphere surrounding the

<sup>6</sup> Gershon Baskin & Zakaria al Qaq, 'The History of IPCRI and Applied Lessons to be Learned from a Joint Share Holder Institute', February 2000, p. 1; Gershon Baskin, 'Ten years of IPCRI: History, Lessons and a Look at the Future', unpublished report, probably mid-1999, p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> Gershon Baskin & Zakaria al Qaq, 'The History of IPCRI and Applied Lessons to be Learned from a Joint Share Holder Institute', February 2000; Gershon Baskin, 'Ten years of IPCRI: History, Lessons and a Look at the Future', unpublished report, probably mid-1999; *IPCRI*, probably published mid-1999; *IPCRI 1988–2000*, probably published mid-2000; interview with Gershon Baskin and Zakaria al Qaq, 23 August 2000.

whole peace process was considerably changed. By then, IPCRI was more also established and trusted. During the years since IPCRI's establishment, the activities, initiatives and legitimacy of the organization only seemed to have improved and increased. In 1998–99, these low-profile, Track 1 ½ meetings with the top echelons in the Israeli and Palestinian societies seemed still to be one of IPCRI's core activities. However, they are difficult to evaluate, because of the nature of such secret and deniable contacts. It is even more difficult, in fact almost impossible – at least within the scope of this task – to have any opinion on the impact that these activities might have had on the ongoing peace process.<sup>9</sup>

There seems to be little doubt that one of IPCRI's major achievements during the 1990s has been to be part of and contribute to a *locally based peace process*. Partly as shown above, IPCRI has a whole range of activities going on, ranging from seminars of all kinds to the writing of research reports. These activities must clearly be seen as input into a locally based peace process. IPCRI is not operating in a vacuum, but has been in regular dialogue with all the various peace efforts that have gone on in the region during the 1990s. However, the election in 1996 of the Netanyahu government, which did not embrace the peace process, created new dilemmas for IPCRI. IPCRI was not established as a protest organization, nor did the institution organize demonstrations or sign petitions. IPCRI's role was – and is – to work with the various governments and try to influence them, regardless of the positions they might represent. During the Netanyahu period, as with the periods when the Labour Party was in government, IPCRI's role was to maintain the contact and deal with day-to-day problems and issues that were created as a result of the peace process. One of IPCRI's main challenges is how to be critical of what the governments are doing, on the one hand, while maintaining high-level access to the same governments, on the other. IPCRI seems to have managed this balancing act. Today IPCRI has a wide network of government officials, elected representatives, civil servants, academics, public figures, opinion makers, and representatives of civil society from Israel and the Palestinian self-rule areas. IPCRI also plays an important role vis-a-vis the international diplomatic community, both with those stationed in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem – as well as with those in their home capitals governments. Both of IPCRI's directors assert that IPCRI is regularly called upon by the international diplomatic community for briefings on subjects related to the peace process and the internal political situation in Israel and the Palestinian areas. IPCRI is visited frequently by research staff from the foreign ministries of various governments. Likewise, IPCRI claims that the institute is a reliable source for local and foreign journalists covering the peace process.<sup>10</sup>

IPCRI also tries to influence and shape the agenda of the peace process. IPCRI raises a lot of issues, including some that are regarded as too difficult and sensitive. IPCRI itself thinks that the institute has been able to move the dialogue and the peace process forward. Again, this is an issue impossible to evaluate within the framework of this report.<sup>11</sup>

Sida's budget support is of utmost importance for the *institutional capacity-building effort*, especially since – as will be elaborated below – the Swedish money is IPCRI's only budget support. IPCRI has a joint organizational structure, based on equal partnership and ownership. IPCRI is managed by two directors – one Israeli and one Palestinian – on a basis of full parity. IPCRI has a Board of Directors comprised of equal numbers of Israelis and Palestinians and having two chairmen, one Israeli and one Palestinian. Every activity is planned and implemented as a partnership. All finan-

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<sup>9</sup> Same references as above.

<sup>10</sup> Same references as above.

<sup>11</sup> Same references as above.

cial and management decisions are taken by both parties. All allocations of funds are implemented jointly, with two signatures on all documents. All letters and announcements are jointly signed. So, at least formally, this codirection and power sharing is implemented at every level. The crucial question to ask, of course, is whether this formalized joint structure also functions in reality as a joint partnership in reality in which the two sides have equal influence and are equally heard. Again, this is an important question to pose, but difficult to answer within the framework and limitations of this task. This needs to be followed up in a more extensive evaluation.<sup>12</sup>

This way of running IPCRI is obviously not the most efficient way of conducting business. But the directors argue that it is essential for the existence of the institution. This institutional structure, joint partnership, also makes IPCRI vulnerable to conflicts over the peace process within its own management and staff. For the Israeli and the Palestinian directors, as well as for the rest of the IPCRI staff, it is difficult, almost impossible, to be removed from the Middle East conflict and the peace process. For a period of time, IPCRI's directors also fell 'into the trap of becoming a microcosm of the conflict'.<sup>13</sup> The conflict between the two directors was most clearly revealed over the Oslo Agreement, signed 13 September 1993. The Palestinian director Zakaria al Qaq was greatly sceptical to both the Oslo Declaration of Principles in itself and to the Palestinian leadership's acceptance of the agreement. He was of the opinion that the whole agreement was working against the national interest of the Palestinian people. Al Qaq thought that the PLO had not invested enough thought in planning a national strategy based on the clearly defined interests of the Palestinians. The Israeli director Baskin, on the other hand, thought that since an agreement had been signed, IPCRI should support the official process and work within its framework.<sup>14</sup>

Consequently, the *locally based peace process* could be seen as ruining the *institutional capacity-building efforts*. For more than a year, IPCRI's office became a battlefield. The two directors were either arguing all the time or – after a while – not talking to each other. About one and a half years after the signing of the Oslo Agreement, at a conference on the future of Jerusalem, the tension between the two directors became apparent to everyone. However, luckily the problems were soon sorted out. After a 'therapy session for disenchanted married couples', the two directors recognized that they really had become a 'microcosm' of the conflict.<sup>15</sup> They realized that they had elaborated political positions that in fact were more extreme than those they really held. The directors realized that not only was the content of IPCRI's work important, but the example that they could become just by living and working in peaceful coexistence was perhaps even more so. Baskin and al Qaq admit that they still have important political disagreements and differences, but – according to both of them – they now manage to deal with their disagreements and differences without blaming each other or taking positions against their mutual interests. They manage to agree on their common interests: how to find and work on projects that contribute to the peace process in itself or to the shaping of peaceful societies in the future.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Same references as above.

<sup>13</sup> Gershon Baskin, 'Ten years of IPCRI: History, Lessons and a Look at the Future', unpublished report, probably mid-1999, p. 7.

<sup>14</sup> Gershon Baskin & Zakaria al Qaq, 'The History of IPCRI and Applied Lessons to be Learned from a Joint Share Holder Institute', February 2000; Gershon Baskin, 'Ten years of IPCRI: History, Lessons and a Look at the Future', unpublished report, probably mid-1999; interview with Gershon Baskin and Zakaria al Qaq, 23 August 2000.

<sup>15</sup> Gershon Baskin, 'Ten years of IPCRI. History, Lessons and a Look at the Future', unpublished report, probably mid-1999, p. 7.

<sup>16</sup> Gershon Baskin & Zakaria al Qaq, 'The History of IPCRI and Applied Lessons to be Learned from a Joint Share Holder Institute', February 2000; Gershon Baskin, 'Ten years of IPCRI: History, Lessons and a Look at the Future', unpublished report, probably mid-1999; interviews with Gershon Baskin and Zakaria al Qaq, 23 August 2000.

## 4. Appropriateness

Sida has provided core support to IPCRI since 1991. In 1991/92, SEK 150,000 was granted. This amount of money was followed up with SEK 350,000 for both 1992/93 and 1994/95. Nothing was granted in 1993/94. For the period 1995/96, SEK 500,000 was given. In October 1996, IPCRI sent an application to Sida requesting SEK 1,000,000 for 1997. Because Sida had neither received the result report nor the revised financial statement for 1995/96, the new request was put on hold. IPCRI also requested SEK 1,000,000 for 1998. However, Sida had still not received any reporting. Consequently, no funds were granted in 1997. In April 1998, IPCRI finally sent to Stockholm audited accounts and balance sheets for 1995 and 1996. The reports were approved by the auditor, without any comments. In 1998 and 1999, the sum of money given from Sida increased considerably. For these years, SEK 2,000,000 was granted per year.<sup>17</sup>

Sida's reason for increasing the amount of money granted was closely linked to the way IPCRI was getting its other financing. In 1998–99, approximately 90% of IPCRI's funding was – and still is – provided by foreign governments supporting the peace process. These include the governments of the United States, Canada, Sweden, Switzerland, Spain, the Netherlands, Finland, Norway and the European Union. Additional support came from the World Bank, the International Development Research Foundation of Canada (IDCR), the Bilance Foundation of Holland, the Conanima Foundation, Yad Hanadiv, the Ford Foundation and the Beracha Foundation based in Jerusalem.<sup>18</sup> *Almost all of IPCRI's work was – and is – financed on a project-to-project basis, leaving almost nothing for core support and long-term development. The contribution from Sweden was the only core budget support received by IPCRI. Consequently, the Swedish support was – and still is – of utmost importance for the existence of the whole institution.* For the years 2000/01 and 2001/02, IPCRI and Sida have a new two-year contract, securing SEK 2,000,000 in core funding per year. IPCRI's current budget is about \$1,000,000. In meetings conducted as part of this evaluation, the great importance attached to the Swedish core grant contribution was emphasized strongly by the IPCRI directors.<sup>19</sup>

With the exception of Sweden, all of the other contributors to IPCRI earmarked their contributions for specific projects. Sometimes administrative expenses were covered, sometimes not. This had made the institution as a whole extremely vulnerable, a situation acknowledged by Sida. In 1998, IPCRI's annual turnover was approximately \$780,000. However, this figure constitutes only one third of the planned budget, a total of \$2,400,000. In dollar terms, Sida's contribution to IPCRI was approximately \$250,000 and constituted 32% of the real costs. As is often the situation with project-funded institutions, not all of the project proposals were sufficiently successful. Big cuts and reorganizations of activities became necessary. For the year 1999, IPCRI planned a lower level of activities. In spite of this, Sida foresaw in 1998 that it was unlikely that IPCRI's whole project portfolio would be financed. Continual reorganizations of activities would again be the case, Sida assumed. Consequently, Sida was very aware of the necessity of maintaining a close and continuing dialogue with IPCRI over the question of activities within the budget framework. With this reservation explicitly stated, Sida saw it as also appropriate to grant SEK 2,000,000 for 1999.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Sida 'Bedömningspromemoria' for 1998 and 1999.

<sup>18</sup> *IPCRI 1988–2000*, probably published mid-2000, p. 19; Gershon Baskin, 'Ten years of IPCRI: History, Lessons and a Look at the Future', unpublished report, pp. 20–21.

<sup>19</sup> *IPCRI 1988–2000*, probably published mid-2000, p. 19; Gershon Baskin, 'Ten years of IPCRI: History, Lessons and a Look at the Future', unpublished report, pp. 20–21; interviews with Gershon Baskin and Zakaria al Qaq, 23 August 2000.

<sup>20</sup> Sida 'Bedömningspromemoria' for 1998 and 1999.

The granting of money, the increasing of the sum as well as the withholding of money in 1997, were all based on a close relationship and dialogue between IPCRI and Sida, with the Swedish Consulate in Jerusalem as a crucial link. There were – and are – regular contacts and open discussions between the two IPCRI directors and the Sida official responsible for the Middle East in Stockholm.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, Sida seems to be fully aware of the problems attached to project-based support and seems willing to support the institution appropriately with its budget grant. Sida is conscious that such budget support gives IPCRI a certain amount of desperately needed flexibility. According to information received from IPCRI, Sida's contribution in 1998–99 was used to cover running costs and to contribute to under-financed, but highly prioritized projects, especially the ones related to the final status negotiations.<sup>22</sup>

Sida also seems fully aware of the problems related not only to the project-financed model but also to the way the priorities of various donor countries tend to make IPCRI's activities unfocused and diffuse. Limited overheads on projects tend to deprive the institution of flexibility and room for manoeuvre. The donors coordinate their grants only to a small degree, and the donor countries have different priorities as to the kind of projects and specific issues they want to fund. In general, the tendency seems to be that the various NGOs run after the stream of money, instead of focusing on their own priorities and basic competence. An institution like IPCRI cannot afford to be ruled only by its own needs and wishes. Sida thinks that a higher cost effectiveness, through a higher degree of budget support, would have given IPCRI a better opportunity to plan its activities. However, Sida accepts, after discussing the matter with IPCRI, that it seems impossible to get more coordination between the donor countries. Given this, Sida's judgement and arguments seem to be highly appropriate and support the continuation of budget support.<sup>23</sup>

There are also other reasons for IPCRI's more unfocused and diffuse activities and changed profile during this period. IPCRI has a tendency to throw too many balls in the air at the same time and not to be able to keep them all up. There seems to be a tendency to initiate many projects without having them financially secured. A project-based institution like IPCRI has to do this – to a certain degree – to survive. However, such risk taking ought to be limited to IPCRI's basic competence areas. When moving into new fields with huge projects, such as the Peace Education Programme, such a policy is dangerous and more likely to fail. For instance, the Peace Education Programme, still a pilot project in 1998–99, did not manage to secure enough funding for 1999. For the year 2000, the Peace Education Programme has so far received nothing. The European Commission, the official People-to-People programme and a US foundation turned the proposal down. Three thousand teachers and students were already involved. Consequently, it is the Sida core grant that is used to cover for the lack of funding. The Sida money becomes a kind of risk capital. On the one hand, it is necessary to allow for new initiatives and in order to move the institution into new fields. On the other, the risks involved with projects as large as the Peace Education Programme are considerable. Another option for securing the financial situation of an institution is, where possible, to charge the projects a higher overhead and use that money to secure both the institution and the move towards new fields. It is unclear whether this option has been seriously discussed between IPCRI and Sida.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> This is explicitly confirmed both by Mats Bengtsson, Sida's Programme Officer, Division for the Mediterranean Region, and the two IPCRI directors.

<sup>22</sup> Sida 'Bedömningspromemoria' for 1998 and 1999.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> As regards the crucial role of the Swedish Consulate in the Sida–IPCRI relationship, see the section on 'Location(s) of Responsibility', below.

## 5. Coherence

Coherence has both an internal and external aspect. The internal coherence is related to Sida's own goals and the support to IPCRI. As mentioned, according to Sida's own guidelines, Swedish development aid to the West Bank and Gaza should primarily provide support to the ongoing peace process. It seems beyond doubt that this goal has been fulfilled and that there exists a strong internal coherence between Sida's own goals and their support to an institution like IPCRI.

Externally, there also seem to be a strong coherence between the activities of IPCRI and other agencies, governments, NGOs, etc. Sida's core support to IPCRI matches and complements the project-based support of other governments and agencies. But perhaps even more relevant is the way IPCRI's activities and work relate to the rest of the ongoing peace process in the Middle East. Many comparable activities on the local, regional and international level are going on all the time. As a consequence of the signing of the Oslo Agreement in September 1993, a whole 'industry' of peace-related activities sprouted all over Israel and the Palestinian areas. Peace and people-to-people projects became fashionable. However, it is important to bear in mind that IPCRI was established some years earlier, primarily as a consequence of the *intifada*. This early establishment implies a deep vision on the part of the founding fathers, rather than a short-term interest or a politically expedient whim. IPCRI seems at all times to have related very well to the actual peace process – internally, regionally and internationally.

During the late 1990s, IPCRI's agenda expanded with new initiatives, as did its legitimacy in the eyes of the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority. In 1998–99, IPCRI had ongoing projects in cooperation with the Israeli Ministries of Environment and of Agriculture, the Palestinian Ministry of Economy and Trade, the Israeli Authority for Nature Protection and National Parks, the PA Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, as well as projects with Israeli and Palestinian parliamentarians. Participants from the Israeli Prime Minister's Office, the Foreign Ministry, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Defence, as well as Palestinians from the PA Negotiation Affairs Department and other PA Ministries have regularly participated in IPCRI's activities.<sup>25</sup>

The overall goal of IPCRI is to create better preconditions for debate between influential actors attached to the peace process and, through doing so, to influence the public debate. Indirectly, this is done by making IPCRI's research and experience on practical solutions to problems available for influential actors. These might then, in subsequent rounds, influence public policy and, through this, the peace process itself. Sida argues that core support to such an organization, which functions as a catalyst, is in accordance with the strategy and guidelines for support of the peace process. This applies particularly to the work concerning practical solutions in the final status negotiations. Sida feels that IPCRI has really managed to establish itself as an independent Israeli–Palestinian 'think tank' that is greatly trusted by both communities. Consequently, the institution performs a very important function in the ongoing Israeli–Palestinian dialogue. Sida shares this view with the Swedish Consulate in Jerusalem. The Consulate feels that IPCRI is one of the best-functioning forums for dialogue and cooperation between the Israelis and the Palestinians. The Consulate, supported by Sida, also believes that granting money to an organization like IPCRI becomes even

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<sup>25</sup> Gershon Baskin & Zakaria al Qaq, 'The History of IPCRI and Applied Lessons to be Learned from a Joint Share Holder Institute', February 2000; Gershon Baskin, 'Ten years of IPCRI: History, Lessons and a Look at the Future', unpublished report, probably mid-1999; *IPCRI*, probably published mid-1999; *IPCRI 1988–2000*, probably published mid-2000; interview with Gershon Baskin and Zakaria al Qaq, 23 August 2000.

more important when seen in the light of the many problems with the peace process. The relevance of supporting IPCRI is seen as being beyond doubt.<sup>26</sup>

## 6. Connectedness

Will IPCRI have any lasting impact in the region? The question of sustainability is a crucial one. On the one hand, the impact of IPCRI's work must be considered. But how do we measure IPCRI's impact on the peace process? On the other hand, the question of whether IPCRI would survive in the region without the economic help of Sida must also be evaluated. Consequently, there is a question of sustainability both as regards the impact and content of IPCRI's work and as regards the financing of the institution.

### 6.1 Content and impact

Considering the difficulties in creating a sustainable peace in the Middle East, the importance and relevance of IPCRI's work seems to be beyond doubt. The Israelis and the Palestinians need forums where they can talk directly to each other, raise and discuss difficult questions and exchange experience and knowledge. That the issues taken up by IPCRI in various seminars and in their reports are both important and relevant seems unquestionable. The impact of all these various kinds of activities on the peace process is more difficult to evaluate. However, as long as the activities are related to crucial issues in the final status talks, such as the future of Jerusalem and the Palestinian refugees, and as long as they include important figures on both sides, we may assume that they also have an impact on the discussions connected to finding a peaceful solution. However, this is only something that we may assume, not something we can prove. If such impact is to be evaluated, IPCRI's research and information must first be examined, so that the quality and originality of the output can be assessed. And, secondly, there must be some consideration of whether IPCRI's research and information is reflected on the negotiating table.

In a conflict like the one in the Middle East, documentation, figures and sources are all highly politicized. As a point of departure in any political discussion, the parties need to agree on the documentation constituting the basis for discussion. IPCRI's research also needs to be measured against such a criteria, i.e. whether the parties agree on the documentation which forms the basis for research and discussions.

Taking the limits of this evaluation into account, the quality of IPCRI's work is difficult to assess. As Sida points out, the relevance of IPCRI's research and the importance of IPCRI's various dialogue forums seem obvious, not least at this stage in the peace process. However, an extensive evaluation and assessment of IPCRI's research, programmes and meetings is a task that does need to be carried out. Both in 1998 and in 1999, Sida pointed out that such an evaluation had not been carried out but ought to be if more long-term support was to be granted after 1999. Apparently, this did not happen. At the end of 1999, IPCRI was granted a two-year core grant contract for 2000–01, on the same level as earlier and on the same terms as in the previous years. Prior to this decision, there was no peer review or checking of the quality of IPCRI's work. The issue seemed to have been raised internally at Sida, but has not been followed up.

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<sup>26</sup> Sida 'Bedömningspromemoria' for 1998 and 1999; this is confirmed in conversations both with Sida official Mats Bengtsson and Swedish Consulate representative Ellinor Hammar skjöld in Jerusalem.

Sida's arguments for granting the core grant also changed. In 1998, a peer review examining the quality of IPCRI's work was linked to May 1999, the original time scheduled for the finalization of all the difficult questions related to a future peace. In 1999, when the final status negotiations still seemed to be somewhere on the horizon, the new argument was that a peer review might be considered before Sida entered into any future support. The whole discussion of a more extensive evaluation seemed to be very much linked to the progress, or rather the lack of progress, towards a future peaceful solution. As long as the peace process was as entrenched as it had been and continued to be, Sida seemed – and still seems – to think that IPCRI's crucial role more or less stands up for itself. However, even if a peaceful solution should be found in the near future, there would still be a long way to go from a signed agreement on the table to implementation on the ground. There would still be a huge number of conflicting issues left to be solved. Future challenges and tasks for IPCRI would by no means run out the day a peace agreement would be signed. Therefore, an extensive evaluation of IPCRI's work will still be needed, independent of the progress – or lack of it – at the negotiating table.

IPCRI's various conferences and round-table discussions give the parties the possibility of putting forward and debating all the difficult questions involved, both with each other and within their own camps. Some of these conferences are open, others are not. The purpose of closed conferences is protection from media exposure. In the Middle East, as in most other conflicts, an element of suspicion between the parties is prominent. In addition, the parties are always very careful about making their opinions public. Again, it is difficult to evaluate what impact such closed meetings and conferences have on the peace process. The experience from the Oslo peace process – and other back channel approaches – is that the element of secrecy and deniability is decisive in a conflict with as much suspicion and tension as the one in the Middle East. On the other hand, it might be argued that the need for Track 2 interventions and various other kinds of deniable meetings and activities decreased after the signing of the Oslo Agreement. In the Declaration of Principles and the letters exchanged between Israel and the PLO, the two enemies recognized each other's legitimacy and right to represent their respective peoples. After 1993, Israel and the PLO were able to talk directly to each other and use direct channels to sort out their disagreements. Though the need for less formal contacts remained, its importance in the 1998–99 period reviewed here was less than in the past.

## 6.2 Economic sustainability

A major obstacle in the way of a more effective IPCRI is – as already mentioned – the way the institution is financed through projects. Generally, the donors have their own opinions and priorities. This limits IPCRI's flexibility and ability to plan and prioritize. This situation is made worse by the fact that many projects are not fully financed: many of the donors do not cover indirect administrative costs. IPCRI, on its side, often initiates projects before any financial base is secured at all. IPCRI uses the Sida grant as start or risk capital. Then the institution is forced either to try to get additional funding elsewhere or to manage the whole project on a shoestring budget. This is clearly shown by IPCRI's budget and accounts for 1998: IPCRI's turnover was only one third of the originally planned budget.

Sida acknowledges that this project-financing model, together with the different priorities of donor countries, tends to make IPCRI's activities unfocused and diffuse. According to Sida, increasing the core budget support would give IPCRI the possibility of improved cost efficiency and a better opportunity to plan its own activities. Sida does not foresee any possibility of improving the coordination of the donor countries.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Sida 'Bedömningspromemoria' for 1998 and 1999.

However, this situation is not limited to IPCRI. These are concerns and challenges for most research institutions and NGOs, not only in the Middle East but all over the world. An entirely direct-cost-based project-financing model gives little room for manoeuvre and planning. In IPCRI's case, however, the question of the institution's *economic sustainability* seems to be the most crucial one. Is IPCRI, as it is presently run, economically sustainable? Does IPCRI stand any chance of survival in the region without the core grant support from Sida? Do there exist possibilities other than core grant support – and, in fact, increased core grant support – that might help to improve IPCRI's financial situation?

The 1998 and 1999 financial statements do not give a comforting picture as regards IPCRI's future and the institution's economic sustainability. At the end of 1998, IPCRI's net assets were, despite a deficit of \$50,000, at a satisfactory level: \$206,000, approximately 25% of the total support and revenue. In addition to Sida's grant (\$252,000), USAID was the largest contributor with its \$294,000 grant. In 1998, almost every project was fully financed from various donors. In addition, a project surplus of \$30,000 was used to cover IPCRI's running expenditures.<sup>28</sup>

The economic picture was different in 1999. IPCRI's net assets were at this stage only \$152,000, a reduced level of 21% of the total support and revenue. In both 1998 and 1999, IPCRI had a deficit of approximately \$50,000. In addition, the level of activities was reduced. The turnover was decreased from \$823,000 in 1998 to \$708,000 in 1999.<sup>29</sup>

In 1999, the various project grants were not even sufficient to cover the direct project costs. Approximately \$10,000 of the Sida core grant was used to cover direct project expenditures. In addition, the Sida budget support covered all the other administrative costs. Moreover, a dramatic cut in the operating expenses was made. The administrative expenses were only half of what they had been in 1998. Salaries were cut by \$100,000, constituting only 42 % of what had been paid in salaries in 1998. If the expenses in 1999 had been on the same level as in 1998, IPCRI would technically have been bankrupt. However, all of these dramatic cuts in expenditure did not prevent the institution in 1999 having a deficit on the same level as in 1998, approximately \$50,000. If this development continues, IPCRI will use up all its net assets within the coming three-year period.<sup>30</sup>

In other words, IPCRI is far too dependent on the Sida core grant support's remaining at the level it is today, and preferably being on an even higher level than the present SEK 2,000,000. If IPCRI is not able to find some new financial sources, the institution may be bankrupt in the near future. And there is an even worse prospect: if Sida for some reason withdrew or cut its budget support, the institution might as well close down immediately, at least in its present form and with its present level of activities. So, for all its relevance, importance and assumed impact on the peace process, the aspect of economic sustainability is the crucial issue for IPCRI.<sup>31</sup>

IPCRI's lack of economic sustainability, as partly shown already, is not only linked closely to how the institution is currently funded, but also to how IPCRI is run. A keyword seems to be lack of concentration. Core areas of competence need to be plotted out. As already mentioned, a better financial basis needs to be secured before IPCRI enters into new areas, such as the Peace Education

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<sup>28</sup> IPCRI, Financial statements, 1998 and 1999.

<sup>29</sup> Same references as above. The huge grant from USAID was dramatically reduced from \$294,000 to \$55,000. On the positive side, the government of Denmark had granted \$170,000.

<sup>30</sup> Same references as above.

<sup>31</sup> According to Director Baskin, IPCRI has asked Sida to be allowed to invest some of the Swedish money in funds or in bonds. IPCRI wanted to do so in order to secure a better financial basis for the institution. However, Sida has turned this suggestion down, explaining that such investments are against Sida policy.

Programme. Initiating such huge projects without solid backing is risky indeed: all of the Peace Education Programme's expected financial support in fact failed.<sup>32</sup>

In addition, IPCRI's project costs ought to be calculated at a higher rate, not only to cover the projects' direct expenditures, but also to raise a proportion high enough to cover IPCRI's running costs. With a stronger and stricter concentration on core areas of research and information, a higher percentage for overheads might be charged and might be more easily argued for. A higher percentage for overheads would give IPCRI more room to manoeuvre and great institutional resilience. An increase in Sida's budget support would, of course, be a nice and easy way for IPCRI to improve its finances. However, this is not the only way forward or the only way to solve IPCRI's financial problems. Seen in such a context, IPCRI is not at all unusual or more vulnerable than other NGOs and research institutions, not only in the Middle East but all over the world. Institutions across the entire research sector are submitting huge amounts of project proposals, in competition with each other, in order to secure funding for their project activities and make their institutions more solid financially. Improving IPCRI's research and general competence will strengthen the institution's competitiveness and thus improve the institution's financial situation.

## 7. Gender equality

Gender equality is one of Sida's four action programmes for mainstreaming, and may be regarded as one that is particularly relevant in the context of conflict, given the degree to which images of self-identity, modes of communicating, models of organization and traditions of participation are at stake in most violent conflicts.

The question here is whether IPCRI's project planning and implementation address issues of participation of women as well as men. IPCRI exists between two pressures, one working against it taking up gender issues, the other pushing in the opposite direction. The first pressure is the way assumptions drawn from an intellectual and political milieu influence institutions, policies and actions. The world of high politics, towards which IPCRI works, is extremely male dominated, and not only in the Middle East. On the other hand, in both Israeli and Palestinian societies, there are relatively high proportions of well educated and competent women. On both sides, there is a large number of women's organisation and mixed gender organisations working on gender issues. In this, both Israeli and Palestinian societies are far ahead of the other states in the Middle East. However, IPCRI does not show any signs of being at the forefront of this trend.

In the interview with Director Baskin, however, he pointed out how he was conscious about this dimension. In order to try to improve the gender balance, he had recently hired two female programme coordinators working with the Palestinian refugee question. He underlined that a lot still needs to be done, but that IPCRI is conscious of gender-equality issues. So one may expect that gender would be an issue to be seriously considered in the near future.

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<sup>32</sup> As far as I have understood, the Peace Education Programme was initially financed – as a pilot project – by the EU and USAID. According to the information I received, both from Baskin and Khader Muslih of Meda Team, a company providing technical assistance to the EC Representative Office, neither the US foundation nor the EU programme had granted any further support to IPCRI's Peace Education Programme. According to Signe Gilen, the project coordinator of the official People-to-People programme in 1998–2000, IPCRI's application had been turned down by the official programme as well.

## 8. Flexibility

Flexibility is important in peace-support projects. Indeed, inflexibility can kill worthwhile projects. It is a complaint commonly made against grant-giving agencies that their officials, being based at offices far from the point of action, might place greater emphasis on routines and contracts than on the realities on the ground.

However, this seems not to be a weakness in the relationship between Sida and IPCRI, with the Swedish Consulate in Jerusalem being the crucial link. The discussions about the size of the core grant from 1997 and onwards, as well as the discussions connected to IPCRI's lack of reporting, might be seen as an example of Sida putting great emphasis on routines and reporting. However, it would not seem to be too much to demand from an institution like IPCRI, receiving so much money in budget support, that the institution explain how it has spent the money. In addition, an audit report, an annual report and a working plan for the next year must be a minimum requirement from a donor before new grants are awarded.

Despite this, open, continuing and fruitful dialogue, accompanied by a flexible approach, seems generally to characterize the relationship between Sida, IPCRI and the Swedish Consulate. The communication seems to be frank and direct. A Sida official or a diplomat at the Consulate can easily call, mail or contact the directors at IPCRI – and vice versa. In fact, it is more appropriate to ask whether sufficient distance is held. The Swedes seem so satisfied with IPCRI, and IPCRI seems to be so satisfied with the Swedes, that too few critical questions seem to be asked. For the Swedes, support to an institution like IPCRI seems to be a very appropriate thing to do. It fits the goal for development aid to the West Bank and Gaza, and it gives a feeling of giving direct support to the peace process. But how locally based is IPCRI and how much local support does it in fact have? Does the institution communicate better with donor countries, like Sweden, than with its own local communities? What kind of legitimacy does IPCRI have both locally and regionally? In addition, a critical approach both to how IPCRI runs its business and to the quality and originality of IPCRI's work seem to be lacking on the part of Sida and the Swedish Consulate. It may well be that the answers to these questions turn out to be positive ones, but that is not the issue at stake here. The point is that these questions ought to be asked and ought to be examined further.

There is another important aspect of flexibility that ought to be discussed. That aspect is related to IPCRI's shift in focus and should look at how major goals and new areas of activities are decided upon. At IPCRI, we clearly see a shift in focus from conflict-related to post-conflict-related issues. This is a process initiated and developed by IPCRI itself. As stated in several of IPCRI's publications, the main challenge in the first ten years was to create effective partnerships between the Israelis and the Palestinians. This had first to be done within IPCRI and then in the two societies – including government officials, elected representatives, public figures, public opinion-makers, civil servants, businessmen and ordinary citizens. Now, the challenges for the future, as IPCRI sees them, are: First, to see a final resolution of the conflict through the formal process of negotiation leading to peace treaties. Second, to move the Israeli–Palestinian relationship from a conflict-based adversarial relationship to post-conflict cooperation. Third, to translate the peace process from documents and agreements signed by the respective parties into peace between the peoples. A culture of peace needs to be developed. Normalization of relations in the region and the 'people-

to-people' basis will be the main challenge for the next generation. IPCRI states that the organization will focus much of its attention on a wide range of 'next generation' initiatives over the coming decade.<sup>33</sup>

IPCRI's new emphasis on environmental issues and peace education are two good examples of this shift in focus. As clearly shown above, there are many arguments favouring such a shift: It shows that IPCRI is not a rigid institution, but is definitely capable of adapting to new challenges and situations. Moreover, it shows that IPCRI is responding to political developments in the region and is trying to contribute to building a peaceful and common future for the peoples in the region. On the other hand, and as already pointed out, such a shift does not only have positive impacts. Such a development tends to make IPCRI's activities unfocused and diffuse. It is probable that many donor countries will invest their money and energy in areas that seem to have lasting impact for the peoples in the region. They will try to support building up a peaceful society from the ground. As a consequence of such a situation, it would be very tempting – both for IPCRI and the other NGOs in the Middle East – to run after the stream of money instead of concentrating on their own key areas of competence or on their potential new and carefully built-up areas of competence.

Sida's SEK 2,000,000 per year is IPCRI's only core budget support and definitely gives IPCRI flexibility. At a project-based institution like IPCRI, this is both necessary and important. But does such a way of granting money also secure sufficient quality? There are many things that can be said about competition; but one positive aspect of competition, for instance when various institutions are invited to send in competing project proposals, might be that the most competent institution and the best thought-out proposal receive the grant. This is one way of securing quality that might be lost with more flexible types of budget support. However, if flexible budget support is accompanied with thorough peer review or extensive and regular evaluations, quality control might still be accomplished. In the case of IPCRI, the score on flexibility is tremendously high while the score on quality and impact remains unclear before a proper evaluation is done.

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<sup>33</sup> See for instance, *IPCRI 1988–2000*, p. 2; 'IPCRI Proposal for Sida – 2000. A Vision for the Future of IPCRI. A Concept Paper for the Years 2000–2010. From Conflict to Post-Conflict and Work Plan for the Year 2000'.

## 9. Location(s) of responsibility

There is an explicit division of labour between Sida and IPCRI, with the Swedish Consulate in Jerusalem as the crucial link between them. Sida takes the decisions and grants the money. During this decisionmaking process, the Swedish Consulate is regularly contacted for input and advice. Sida delegates to the Swedish Consulate in Jerusalem the task of designing and negotiating the contracts between Sida and IPCRI. In addition, a close follow-up is also regularly conducted by the Consulate. The Consulate receives IPCRI's publications, in addition to attending as observer at many of IPCRI's seminars. IPCRI's reports, both on finances and on results, are handed in to the Consulate, which in turn comments on the reports before sending them further to Sida in Stockholm. The Swedish Consulate is, in other words, Sida's local representative in the region. Consequently, Sida's follow-up seems close to the local institution it supports and well-informed. However, again the question is more whether a sufficient distance is maintained so that critical questions can be asked.<sup>34</sup>

IPCRI, on its side, has to report back to Sida and explain and justify its use of the Swedish money. Obviously, this is not an easy task when the money received is not for a specific project but for general budget support. In addition to reporting on the various activities conducted throughout a year, IPCRI also links its use of the Swedish money to its overall goals and to the fact that the institution is a joint partnership.

Not all of IPCRI's activities are seen as equally relevant to Sida's overall goal for granting money. For instance, in 1999, Sida pointed out that IPCRI certainly works within areas, such as the health sector, that are explicitly not supported by Sida. However, Sida still continues to give and legitimize its budget support, arguing that the overall goal for IPCRI's work is to contribute to a dialogue between the parties. IPCRI's joint partnership also implies that in every activity in which IPCRI becomes engaged – from local activities to political round-table conferences – both Palestinians and Israelis are equally represented. Consequently, Sida is willing to stretch the arguments for budget support way beyond areas that are even explicitly not supported by Sida. IPCRI's joint partnership and overall goal justifies quite a lot in itself.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> This is confirmed in conversations both with Sida official Mats Bengtsson and Swedish Consulate representative Ellinor Hammar skjöld in Jerusalem.

<sup>35</sup> Sida, 'Bedömningspromemoria' for 1999. I have no reasons to comment on options for taking corrective action if any of those involved stray into another's territory. The dialogue and communication between IPCRI, Sida and the Swedish Consulate seem to be so good that such situations have not occurred in this case. In a way, following nearly as a consequence of this close relationship, everyone involved seems also continuously aware of which individuals have responsibility for projects in the other organizations. On the IPCRI side, it is also very simple as long as the two founding fathers all along have been, and still are, in charge of the institution.

## 10. Pressure for success/possibility of failure

Evaluations of peace-support projects have shown that refusal to accept failure implies unwillingness to act. It can also be the case that excessive pressure for success leads to carefully doctored reports which ultimately lead to self-deception by the organizations involved.<sup>36</sup>

Do IPCRI's benchmarks – set out in project proposals, contracts, interim and final reports – appear to have an appropriate level of ambition? IPCRI does not seem to have a problem accepting failure, nor does it seem to be self-deceiving in terms of its real activity. Lack of activity is not an issue. The element of being too ambitious, jumping into new initiatives and activities, seems rather to be the case. This is apparent by looking at IPCRI's budget and accounts for 1998, where the turnover was only one third of what was originally planned. Such a highly unrealistic way of budgeting implies a culture where the ambitions do not reflect an appropriate degree of realism. This may tell us something about the culture in the organization being over-optimistic and over-ambitious. Moreover, activity seems to be too unfocused and diffuse.

As already implied, IPCRI's level of activity and their budgets ought to be more controlled. It would be an advantage, both for IPCRI and Sida, if IPCRI concentrated on defining its core areas of competence, strengthening this competence and securing the quality of activities. There is little doubt that IPCRI's ambitions are high and that the institution is involved in a lot of activities. Many reports are also published. But what is the result of all this activity as regards content, quality and impact on the peace process?

As discussed earlier, IPCRI has a tendency to throw too many balls into the air at the same time and cannot grasp them all. There seems to be a tendency to initiate and start many projects without securing them financially. A project-based institution like IPCRI has to do so – to a certain degree – simply to survive. However, such risk taking ought to be limited to IPCRI's basic areas of competence. When moving into new fields, with rather large projects, such a project policy is more dangerous and more likely to fail. Consequently, the Sida core grant is used to cover up for the lack of funding. The Sida money becomes a kind of risk capital. On the one hand, this is necessary in order to be able to take new initiatives and to be able to move the institution into new fields. On the other hand, the risks involved, for example with a project the size of the Peace Education Programme, are considerable. The question is whether IPCRI's drive towards high ambitions and success might become its road to failure.

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<sup>36</sup> 'Inception Report', p. 11.

## 11. Institutional competence/staff base

The question of whether experience in peace-support projects is leading to the development of institutional competence in this area of activity might be discussed both from a Sida and an IPCRI perspective. On the Sida side, the programme officer in charge seems to have built up both knowledge and experience about the Middle East region and peace-support projects. He has been the responsible officer for the Mediterranean region since 1998. This means, of course, that he covers not only the Middle East conflict but the whole Mediterranean area. The Swedish support to IPCRI is only one of a number of projects supported by Sweden and becomes, as such, perhaps only small 'pocket money'.

The Sida programme officer also has a pool of people and knowledge to draw upon. The Sida officer has regular contact with the two IPCRI directors, and has also frequently visited both the region and IPCRI. In addition, Sida gets valuable information from the Swedish Consulate, which has been delegated the task of follow-up, and is also able – by being situated in Jerusalem – to follow IPCRI's activities almost on a daily basis, if necessary. Representatives from the Swedish Consulate attend many of IPCRI's activities and can gain information on IPCRI from locally based people and NGOs. Although the diplomats at the Swedish Consulate, like other diplomats, are regularly transferred to other diplomatic posts all over the world, the Swedish Consulate in itself has continuous competence and knowledge and represents a pool of general information on peace-support projects that might provide the Swedes with the information needed to gain a sufficient and balanced view of IPCRI. But again, questions might be asked as to what degree critical questions are raised. It seems as if neither Sida in Stockholm nor the Swedish Consulate in Jerusalem has really considered or reflected upon the extensive criticism that is raised by other donors and NGOs in the region towards IPCRI and its activities. This criticism is not, by itself, evidence of errors or problems at IPCRI, but when it is put forward by many independent sources and when the information received all tends in the same direction, it suggests there is a serious issue needing further enquiry. My informants, giving me the information off the record, say that IPCRI's activities are unfocused and that its projects, particularly the peace Education Programme, are neither sufficiently scholarly nor securely financed. Question marks are also raised about the over-ambitiousness of the two directors, their salary level and the transparency of the organization. Last, but not least, IPCRI's legitimacy and standing among the Israelis and the Palestinians is questioned. Of course, such criticism ought to be treated with great caution and not taken at face value. However, it ought to be examined in a more extensive evaluation.

On the IPCRI side, the two directors, Dr Gershon Baskin and Dr Zakaria al Qaq, have been heading the institution since the day it was founded. They both have strong formal competence. Baskin holds a PhD in International Affairs with a dissertation on 'Sovereignty and Territory in the Future of Jerusalem'. Zakaria al Qaq holds a PhD in International Relations, having specialized in regional strategic issues. There is no doubt that both of them have solid experience and knowledge that they can draw upon, both as researchers and as directors. However, Sida seems to think that this formal competence and long-term working experience alone decreases the risk of poor research products and political difficulties. As Sida sees it, it is of utmost importance that the 'right' people with the 'right' influence and positions are affiliated to IPCRI's research projects, seminars and conferences. If not, IPCRI's activities might easily be seen as politically biased, and any impact on the peace process might be minimized. Sida seems to think that having such senior, experienced and formally competent directors decreases the risk of political bias and insufficient

legitimacy. But this claim has not been empirically tested and qualified. An extensive evaluation of IPCRI's research and activities ought also to look into IPCRI's standing and reputation in the region.

Whether junior staff continue to work at IPCRI after project completion and whether there are special arrangements for staff to develop relevant competence are questions that are very difficult to answer. Primarily, the lack of answers to these questions is linked to the way IPCRI is organized. Most of IPCRI's staff is hired on a project-to-project basis, because of the way IPCRI is funded. However, it is possible to organize a project-funded institution in a less project-based way. IPCRI's current full staff is approximately 11 people, with an additional pool of some 30 freelancers, researchers, interns and volunteers. These figures show that the pool of people primarily employed and stationed at IPCRI is a very small one. It mainly consists of the two directors, a couple of programme directors and some project coordinators. The rest of the project staff goes in and out of IPCRI, in accordance with the changing projects. This is not a very unusual situation, nor one that only applies to IPCRI. Hiring project staff that one can also dismiss if necessary as the fluctuation of money goes up and down is a reality that most research institutions are confronted with. However, there are also strong arguments for having a larger permanent staff, with junior researchers and junior project coordinators included. This would lead to increased job security for the people involved and, hopefully, to a stronger sense of loyalty towards IPCRI. This, in turn, will make more staff eager to protect and take an active part in the well-being of the institution as such, and the institution's own competence will gradually increase. After developing a more competent staff, it will also be easier for the IPCRI management to transfer junior staff from one project to another. To structure the institution more in this direction, instead of having a pool of people constantly coming in and out, ought to be in the interests of the IPCRI management itself.

A larger permanent staff might lead to a stronger need and demand for co-responsibility on the part of the employers. The employees do not seem to have a huge influence on project proposals and project outlines. IPCRI seems to have a rather strong hierarchical structure, where the two directors have a large amount of power. The Israeli director Baskin seems to be the one writing up all the project proposals. Also, seen from the outside, he seems to be the most active and visible one. Internally, Baskin seems to be the one most of the employees address directly and are most open towards. Baskin himself claims that he, as opposed to the Palestinian director al Qaq, wants to work towards having a more democratic IPCRI where the employees have more to say. However, the two directors might reflect a difference in culture, whereby the Israelis might be said to have a more longstanding democratic tradition than the Palestinians.<sup>37</sup> In addition, questions may be raised as to how joint and how equal this partnership really is. Does the relationship between the two directors mirror the political situation on the ground, where the Israelis are the dominant partner, setting the premises and the conditions for the relationship between the two peoples?

Another aspect of the hierarchy at IPCRI is the institution's salary structure. From the figures and documents received from IPCRI and Sida, it is impossible to say anything about how the salaries are distributed. What is the level of salary of the two directors compared to equivalent leading positions in the region? How large or how small is the gap between the salary level of the two directors when compared to that of the programme directors or other project staff? What are the criteria for deciding upon an appropriate level of salary? Is it based on formal competence, like education, or is it based more on responsibility, management experience or a mixture of all these?

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<sup>37</sup> Interview with Gershon Baskin, 23 August 2000.

How transparent is this system? What level of democracy and influence do the employees at IPCRI have? Is there any strategy for developing the institution internally?

IPCRI is an independent research institution, registered as an Israeli–Palestinian NGO in Israel. IPCRI is not a membership organization in a traditional sense. Membership is offered to persons chosen either by IPCRI's two directors or by the board. The members constitute the General Assembly. The General Assembly meets once a year to be informed about IPCRI's activities and in order to endorse the audit report. Every other year, the General Assembly elects members to IPCRI's board, which consists at the moment of four members. At a minimum, board meetings are held twice a year. IPCRI's two directors are appointed by the board.

IPCRI does not seem to have a very active or challenging board. The board does not appear to have a very strong control function or to see its major responsibility as posing critical questions to the way the directors run IPCRI. Of course one might argue that this is neither necessary nor desirable. Everything functions well, and the board, the directors and the employees are all satisfied with the present situation and the way things are done. However, such questions need to be asked continuously in order to see whether things might be done in a different – and hopefully improved – way.

## 12. Recommendations

IPCRI is an independent research and information centre, established in August 1989. As a consequence of the Oslo Agreement in 1993, working on Israeli–Palestinian peace became fashionable. IPCRI, however, was already established and very active. Right from the start, IPCRI was a joint Israeli–Palestinian project. The institute was founded and is still run by the two founding fathers – the Israeli Dr Gershon Baskin and the Palestinian Dr Zakaria al Qaq. This codirection implies an unique cooperation and makes IPCRI special. Ever since 1991, Sida has provided core support to IPCRI. In 1998 and 1999, the sum of money given from Sida increased considerably. For these years, SEK 2,000,000 was granted per year. For the years 2000–01 and 2001–02, IPCRI and Sida have a new two-year contract, securing SEK 2,000,000 in core funding per year. IPCRI's current budget is about \$1,000,000.

IPCRI has an organizational structure that is joint, based on equal partnership and ownership. IPCRI is managed by two directors – one Israeli and one Palestinian – on the basis of full parity. IPCRI has a board of directors comprised of equal number of Israelis and Palestinians, with two chairmen, one Israeli and one Palestinian. Every activity is planned and implemented as a partnership. Formally, this codirection and power sharing is implemented at every level. Both internally and externally, however, the Israeli director Baskin seems to be the most visible partner. We recommend a more extensive evaluation of whether this formalized joint structure also functions in reality as a joint partnership, where the two sides have equal influence and are equally heard.

IPCRI's activities tend to be unfocused and diffuse. IPCRI has a tendency to throw many balls in the air at the same time and not to be able to keep them all up. There seems to be a tendency to initiate many projects without having them financially secured. A project-based institution like IPCRI has to do this – to a certain degree – to survive. However, such risk taking ought to be limited to IPCRI's basic competence areas. When moving into new fields, with huge projects, such as the Peace Education Programme, such a policy is dangerous and more likely to fail. For IPCRI,

the Sida money now functions as a kind of risk capital. On the one hand, it is necessary to allow new initiatives and to move the institution into new fields. On the other, the risks involved with a project as big as the Peace Education Programme are considerable. We recommend a serious discussion between IPCRI and Sida both on other options for securing the financial situation of IPCRI and on how the organization moves into new fields.

As long as IPCRI's research and overall activities are related to crucial issues in the final status talks, such as the future of Jerusalem and the Palestinian refugees, and as long as they include important figures on both sides, we may assume that they also have an impact on the discussions connected to finding a peaceful solution. However, this is only something that we may assume, not something we can prove. If such impact is to be evaluated, IPCRI's research and information must be looked into, in order to check the quality and originality of the output. Second, there must be some consideration of whether IPCRI's research and information is reflected on the negotiating table.

IPCRI is far too dependent on the Sida core grant support's being on the same level as today, and preferably, being on an even higher level than the present SEK 2,000,000. If IPCRI is not able to find new financial sources, it may face severe difficulties in the near future. And, an even worse prospect, if Sida for some reason withdrew or cut its budget support, the institution might as well close down immediately, at least in its present form and with its present level of activities. While we take it for granted that Sida's most important goal for the core grant support to IPCRI is not to build up the institution and its capacity but to support the peace process, it is important to have a well functioning IPCRI in order to achieve that. In addition, IPCRI's lack of economic sustainability is not only linked closely to how the institution is currently funded, but also to how it is run. A key issue seems to be lack of concentration. Core areas of competence need to be plotted out. A better financial basis needs to be secured before entering into new areas. In addition, IPCRI's project costs ought to be calculated higher, not only to cover the project's direct expenditures, but also in order to cover IPCRI's running costs. With stronger and stricter concentration on core areas of research and information, a higher percentage might be charged for overheads and might more easily be argued for. A higher percentage for overheads would give IPCRI more room to manoeuvre. Improving the institution's research and general competence would strengthen IPCRI's competitiveness and thus improve the institution's financial situation. It is recommended that Sida and IPCRI look seriously into these questions.

An open, continuing and fruitful dialogue, accompanied by a flexible approach, seems generally to characterize the relationship between Sida, IPCRI and the Swedish Consulate. It is therefore perhaps more appropriate to ask whether sufficient distance is held. Both Sida and the Swedish Consulate seem to be so satisfied with IPCRI, and IPCRI seems to be so satisfied with the Swedes, that too few critical questions are asked. For Sida, support to an institution like IPCRI seems a very appropriate thing to provide. It fits with the goals for development aid to the West Bank and Gaza, and it gives a sense of direct support to the peace process. But how locally based is IPCRI and how much local support does it in fact have? Does the institution communicate better with donor countries, like Sweden, than with its own respective local communities? What kind of legitimacy does IPCRI have both locally and regionally? In addition, on the part of Sida and the Swedish Consulate, a critical approach both to how IPCRI runs its business and to the quality and originality of IPCRI's work seems to be lacking. It seems as if neither Sida in Stockholm nor the Swedish Consulate in Jerusalem have really considered or reflected upon the extensive criticism that is raised by other donors and NGOs in the region towards IPCRI and its activities. But when such criticism is put forward by many independent sources and when the information received all tends in the same direction, it is worth looking into. We recommend that this criticism ought to be examined in a more extensive evaluation. It may well be that the answers to these questions turn out to be positive ones,

but that is not the issue at stake here. The point is that these questions ought to be asked and ought to be examined further.

At IPCRI we clearly see a shift in focus from conflict-related to post-conflict-related issues. IPCRI's new emphasis on environmental issues and peace education are two good examples of this change in focus. There are many arguments favouring such a change: It shows that IPCRI is not a rigid institution but is capable of adapting to new challenges and situations. Moreover, it shows that IPCRI is responding to political developments and is trying to contribute to building a peaceful and common future for the peoples in the region. On the other hand, this development tends to make IPCRI's activities unfocused and diffuse. It might also imply a culture where the ambitions do not reflect an appropriate degree of realism. It is both very tempting and to a certain degree necessary – both for IPCRI and the other NGOs in the Middle East – to run after the stream of money instead of concentrating on their own key areas of competence or on their own potential competence. Sida's SEK 2,000,000 per year is IPCRI's only core budget support and definitely gives IPCRI flexibility. At a project-based institution like IPCRI, this is both necessary and important. But does such a way of granting money also secure sufficient quality? When various institutions are invited to send in competing project proposals, it might be that the most competent institution and the best thought-out proposal receive the grant. This is one way of securing quality that one loses with the more flexible core budget support. Another way, perhaps more relevant here, is to accompany core budget support with thorough peer review or extensive and regular evaluations; quality control can thus be accomplished. In the case of IPCRI, the score on flexibility is tremendously high while the score on quality and impact remains unclear before a proper evaluation is done. It would be an advantage both for IPCRI and Sida if IPCRI concentrated on defining its core areas of competence, strengthening this competence and securing the quality of activities. A plan for achieving this ought to be devised.

The two IPCRI directors have been heading the institution since the day it was founded. There is no doubt that both of them have solid experience and knowledge to draw upon, both in their capacities as researchers and as directors. However, there has been a tendency for Sida to think that this formal competence and long-term working experience alone decreases the risk of poor research products and political difficulties. Sida also seems to feel that having such senior, experienced and formally competent directors decreases the risk of political bias and insufficient legitimacy. But this claim has not been tested. An extensive evaluation of IPCRI's research and activities ought also to look into IPCRI's standing and reputation in the region. In addition, IPCRI seems to have a rather strong hierarchical structure where the two directors have a large amount of power. IPCRI has a board which appears neither active nor challenging. The board does not appear to have a very strong control function or to see its major responsibility as posing critical questions to the way the directors run IPCRI. It is recommended that Sida look in more depth at the internal organizational structure at IPCRI.

Is IPCRI and its work really *the institution* to support out of all the institutions doing comparable work in the Middle East? In Israel and the Palestinian areas, a whole jungle of institutions and projects work with the same topics and questions. The main question to ask is whether IPCRI's academic work and approach is the most fruitful compared to all the other NGOs and research institutions. Is IPCRI's work more important than the work done by others? What are Sida's criteria for choosing IPCRI and not one of the others? These critical questions, together with all the others raised earlier, are beyond the scope of this evaluation. However, they need to be looked into and put into a comparative perspective in an extensive evaluation.



## **Annex 3**

### **Case Study for the Evaluation of Sida Projects on Conflict Management and Peacebuilding. The Liberian Cases: STAR Radio and Bridges to Peace**

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# 1. Introduction

This report is one of five component studies chosen for the evaluation of Sida projects of conflict management and peacebuilding. The chosen projects in this component study are the Hironnelle Foundation's STAR Radio project and Conciliation Resources' 'Bridges to Peace' project, both in Liberia. Both of these projects are post-conflict – that is they take place in a period after armed conflict has ended but in a context where peace has not yet been consolidated. Thus, the projects aim at two different aspects of building peace and enabling reconciliation in the aftermath of a civil war. STAR Radio is an effort at contributing to peace through mass media while, Bridges to Peace focuses on the role of women in reconciliation and building peace.

## 1.1 Methodology

The methodology of this case study is based on the terms of reference as stated in the Inception Report of 30 June 2000 of the Study of Sida Projects of Conflict Management and Peacebuilding. It is based on a combination of reviews of available documentation from Sida on the two Liberian projects – including initial project proposals as well as recurrent project reports – and interviews with local people with knowledge of both the Liberian conflict and the projects in question. The interviews in Liberia were conducted in connection with this reviewer's field research there in August 2000. The interviews were constrained by a tight schedule and by difficult circumstances in tracking the right people within the time-frame.

## 2. Overview of the Liberian conflict

The Liberian civil war was instigated on Christmas Eve in 1989, when a few hundred armed fighters from the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) led by Charles Taylor launched an incursion into Nimba County of Northeastern Liberia. The immediate aim of the attack was to oust the dictatorship of President Samuel Doe. The fighting quickly spread to other parts of the country as a result of the counterinsurgency strategy of the national Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL). By mid-1990, the NPFL had seized control of most of the country and had besieged the capital, Monrovia. By September 1990, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) had sent in its Ceasefire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) to halt the carnage. However, the ceasefire signed in November broke down comprehensively in October 1992, when NPFL again attacked Monrovia in a campaign known as 'Operation Octopus'. The peacekeeping force responded with heavy bombing raids. Events moved rapidly after this point, leading to the proliferation of armed factions, continued warfare, a string of national and international conferences and the signing of more peace agreements. As the Liberian conflict progressed, the number of warring factions grew from two to eight. Factions splintered owing to internal tensions arising from a complex mix of strategic differences and personality clashes.<sup>1</sup> The manipulation of ethnicity for political mobiliza-

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<sup>1</sup> Very early, the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL) led by Prince Y. Johnson broke away from the NPFL, accusing Charles Taylor of abandoning the ultimate goals of the rebel movement, and challenged his openly expressed presidential ambitions. Another group, the NPFL Central Revolutionary Council (NPFL-CRC), was formed in 1994, and similarly voiced concern over the lack of vision of NPFL.

tion contributed to the proliferation of factions, a strategy that included indiscriminate attacks on ethnic groups perceived as enemies.<sup>2</sup> From 1990 through to 1996, several peace agreements were negotiated and agreed upon by the various parties to the conflict, but none achieved a lasting peace. The last breakdown occurred in April 1996, when fighting erupted in Monrovia for the first time since 1992. ECOMOG lost control over the situation, but regained it by late May 1996. ECOWAS revoked the peace process, which resulted in the Abuja II peace accord, signed on 17 August 1996. This agreement established a new transitional government and drew up a new plan for democratic elections as well as for disarmament and demobilization of the factions.

## 2.1 The root causes of the conflict

The Liberian conflict is often explained with reference to the socio-economic and political environment of the 1980s: The regime headed by Master-Sergeant Samuel Doe, who seized power in a coup in April 1980, promised a complete revolution of the Liberian society. But, instead, his regime was characterized by political violence purging real and imagined enemies, a dramatic economic decline and widespread corruption. Doe based his regime on his Krahn ethnic group, whom were given top jobs in the bureaucracy and the officer corps of the army and security forces. In 1985, rigged elections secured Doe the presidency. Later, he suppressed an attempted military coup led by his former ally, Thomas Quiwonkpa. This action led to retaliation against the Gio and Mano people of Nimba County, which was home and power base of Quiwonkpa. In 1989, Charles Taylor could benefit from the alienation of the Gio and Mano, who became willing recruits of the NPFL. The primary confrontation at the start of the war was thus between the Krahn-dominated army, supported by the Mandingo, who had helped prop up Doe's regime, and a rebel force backed by the Gio and Mano. Soon the war developed from being a conflict about control of the state to also include an ethnic dimension. But, the Liberian conflict can also be seen as the brutal culmination of the country's past. Pre-1980 Liberian history is literally the story of the arrival and success of freed North American slaves and Africans liberated from slave ships, resettled along the present-day Monrovia coast in the mid-1900s. For almost a century and a half, these groups dominated the political and economic life of Liberia. Under their rule, indigenous Liberians were treated as second-class citizens and were consistently excluded from decisionmaking processes that affected their lives. Attempts to reform Liberia by the government of William Tolbert (1971–80) were long overdue, and instead gave vent to a deep well of resentment, which erupted into full-scale violence in early 1980. The civil war can perhaps be seen as just one link in a long chain of events by which an exclusionary political establishment might be replaced with a more democratic order.

## 2.2 The main consequences of the conflict

The Liberian civil war was a striking example of contemporary warfare, involving the use of irregular armies and guerrilla tactics. Fighters used light weapons, lacked air cover and were mostly unprofessional. Often, fighters abused traditional practices and 'masks' such as 'juju' (black magic),

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<sup>2</sup> Thus, when the United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia (ULIMO) was formed in Sierra Leone in 1991, it based itself mostly on Mandingo and Krahn refugees. The initial aims of ULIMO were to prevent Taylor from attaining power through the use of force and to protect the shared political interests of the Krahn, the Mandingo and their regional sponsors. In 1994, a split occurred over the allocation of ULIMO posts in the Transitional Government. This led to the formation of a Krahn wing led by Roosevelt Johnson (ULIMO-J) and a predominantly Mandingo faction under the leadership of Alhaji Kromah (ULIMO-K). Later, other factions emerged to defend ethnic and local interests. The most powerful of these new factions was the Liberia Peace Council, which emerged in October 1993 to serve Krahn interests, under the leadership of Dr George Boley.

which supposedly would render them invisible and invincible. There were several large-scale massacres, allegations of cannibalism, rape and ethnic killings carried out by all parties. Child soldiers were widely used.<sup>3</sup> Large segments of the population had seen someone killed, tortured or raped, and a majority had lost a close relative. Trauma on this scale leaves deep scars on a country's collective psyche. While the factions exploited Liberia's natural resources throughout the war, the long-term decline of the formal economy intensified rapidly, further undermining state revenues. The collapse of both the state and the economy was reinforced by a comprehensive destruction of Liberia's infrastructure. Basic amenities such as electricity, water supply and medical services broke down, and many Liberians became dependent on international relief for their subsistence. A final impact of the war was the massive displacement of Liberia's population.<sup>4</sup>

## **2.3 The situation in Liberia at the time of project proposal formulations**

It was within the framework of the precarious peace achieved after the Abuja II agreement of 1996 and elections of a new government in 1997 that the two projects in this study were conceived. The elections were held peacefully with the participation of 13 political parties. The leader of NPFL won 75% of the votes with his new party, the National Patriotic Party. The elections were internationally recognized, and Charles Taylor was inaugurated as President of Liberia on 2 August 1997. It was generally believed that his victory could be attributed to the fact that Taylor was still in de facto control of most of the rural areas, and people feared a return to war if he did not win. While a broad government was set up, the result of the elections was a de facto marginalization of all of the former faction leaders, as well as the main civil opposition leader, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of the United Party (UP). This situation contributed to the prolonged uneasy peace that still lasts. The inability of United Nations Observer Mission to Liberia (UNOMIL) and ECOMOG to completely demobilize the armed factions and reorganize the AFL has attributed to a constant fear of new incursions. Since 1997, four armed incidents have confirmed such fears: in September 1998, fighting erupted in Monrovia; in 1999, there were two brief incursions into Lofa County; and finally, in July 2000, another incursion into Lofa County has not yet been quelled.

## **2.4 Challenges for peacebuilding and reconciliation by the time of project inception**

The impact of the war on Liberia, its infrastructure and especially its people was tremendous. One challenge is the physical rebuilding and reconstruction of infrastructure and economy. A much greater challenge, however, is to build a sustainable peace and political stability after the war. The high human costs of the war may be the greatest challenge for the future healing process in Liberia. By the time of the project inception, peace was still very young and very precarious. To ensure this peace, some of the main challenges for the Liberian people were: (a) ensuring a complete demobilization of the warring factions; (b) healing of war-related trauma; (c) reintegrating ex-combatants into society and local communities; (d) preventing escalation of small-scale and domestic conflicts; (e) solving the ethnic, and other, animosities caused by the war, through reconciliation processes; (f) creating a new sense of security and stability within a new security structure; and (g) facilitating democratic participation in political decisionmaking.

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<sup>3</sup> Various estimates put the total number of Liberian soldiers below the age of 15 at around 6,000, approximately 10% of all fighters. It is further estimated that around 20% of the militias were between the ages of 15 and 17.

<sup>4</sup> In 1995, the number of Liberian refugees across West Africa reached 850,000, while more than a million were internally displaced and some 200,000 died. While these figures are estimates, they do indicate the effect of the war on Liberia's prewar population of 2.6 million.

## 3. STAR Radio

### 3.1 Project background and overview

In March 1997, the Swiss-based NGO Hironnelle Foundation (HF) was asked to evaluate the need for setting up an independent radio station in Liberia by the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES), a US NGO and beneficiary of USAID grants for assisting the transition to democracy. A project proposal was subsequently submitted. The proposal was accepted in June 1997, and the project took off immediately under the terms of a contract between the HF and IFES. Thus, the initial funding came from USAID through IFES, and USAID was the prime donor until 1998. In January 1999, the Dutch Development Agency (NEDA), and later Sida in February 1999, came on board. The necessary authorizations were quickly obtained from the government of Liberia (GoL), and FM transmission to the capital Monrovia began in July 1997. Thus, STAR radio was set up to facilitate a level playing field up to and during the elections of 1997, but it only came up two days prior to them and therefore failed in achieving that immediate goal. However, the station continued on the basis of its longer-termed goals. Short Wave (SW) transmissions were added on September 15 that same year, so that most of the rural countryside could be reached. A majority of their programmes dealt with peace and reconciliation. The STAR Radio programme was based on news and features produced by a team of 38 Liberian journalists and ‘language announcers’ broadcasting in 14 vernacular languages, as well as in English, Liberian English and French. The FM coverage area reached well into the rural areas where thousands of internally displaced were settled. The potential audience exceeded one million (note that at that time Monrovia was crowded with internally displaced people). The SW reception extended throughout Liberia. The news was also distributed via Internet and e-mail by HF in Switzerland. In the rural areas, STAR Radio was the only station other than the one controlled by the government. According to an audience survey conducted by the local professional consultancy firm, Subah-Belleh Associates, STAR Radio was highly valued by most of the Liberians that it reached.

The GoL felt challenged by STAR Radio and therefore took advantage of the funding structure of the station, which was based on foreign grants, and the lack of clarity in its ownership to close down the station for one month in January 1998, and withdrew its SW licence, thus restricting the geographical coverage. The expatriate staff had difficulties in getting labour permits in these periods. The mistake was that HF had not turned the radio station over to local ownership at an earlier stage. That gave the GoL an argument to close it down, which it did again in March 2000, and it has been closed since. Since the closure in March 2000, it is only Sida that has released funds, while USAID and NEDA are withholding theirs until the station is eventually reopened.

### 3.2 Appropriateness

The appropriateness of the STAR Radio project is assessed by considering how the grant recipient (HF) and the donor (Sida) explored its relevance to the circumstances at the given time of the project proposal. Sida was not initially involved in the project and only came on board in 1998/1999, when HF was searching for new funds for the continuation of STAR Radio. Originally, it was IFES who wanted a media programme included in the projects funded by their grant from USAID to support fair and democratic elections in 1997. Thus, the original purpose was to cover the period up to the elections in order to support the democracy-building process. However, the station only came on air two days before the elections and had no impact on them. But, afterwards, under the

given circumstances, the short-term perspective was expanded to support the democracy-building process in general with a serious unbiased news broadcasting station. Consequently, Sida agreed to co-fund the STAR Radio project on the 'face value' of the written project proposal; and, because the project was already ongoing, Sida did not seek to influence or alter it. Sida applied a discrete and principled approach towards the project, which was seen as positive by both the grant recipient and the Liberian implementing staff members.

Generally, the appropriateness of the project has been good; ways to improve the project may be needed, but this remains at the minor technical level. However, the external factor of the government closure of the station does retrospectively raise the question whether it would have been wise to reconsider the project, its ownership, aims and activities. The closures did cause concern over the future of the station, but did not give rise to any discussions with the donors about readjustments of the project. Minor adjustments were handled on the basis of phone calls to Stockholm, followed up with an affirmative letter. The basic concept remains the same, and will continue to do so if the existing funding to the continuance of the project is released. Sida funds are released, but NEDA and USAID funding is only approved and not yet released.

The contact with local sources of information and knowledge between Sida and HF at each stage of the project was very loose, minor and based on trust of the indirect information from the implementing partner, STAR Radio, and the intermediary, HF. One could wish for more direct contact with the donor on the ground in order to have clearer information and an improved potential for project assessment, especially since in Liberia there is no Swedish representation. Hirondelle has, on the other hand, been in very close contact through its expatriates on the ground in Liberia, and through this maintained a high level of professional sensitivity to the political realities. The biggest problem lies in the relationships with the USA, because, when US-Liberian relations deteriorate, this has a negative effect financially – when the USA withholds funds – and politically – because the GoL perceives STAR Radio as a US-owned project. That relationship, however, must not influence the programmes, and STAR Radio has a board that safeguards against such influence. Furthermore, the expatriate consultants have no influence on the programme contents. It is a primary principle of STAR Radio that its news and programmes are unbiased and balanced; this is also required by the donors, who would not fund it if they found it politically biased.

### 3.3 Coherence

STAR Radio is internally very coherent. It is a very focused and organized project with a high level of efficiency. The project evolved from being an externally run organization in the 'building up' phase to gradually delegating responsibility, competencies and decisionmaking to the Liberian board, management and staff. This process, however, was not completed because of the closure of the station. Furthermore, STAR Radio seems to be dependent on HF for funding and for HF's fundraising capacities for some time to come.

The principle of disseminating unbiased information to the Liberian public is the red line throughout the project's organization. Furthermore, the station deliberately supplemented other media institutions in existence in Liberia, which all were either very commercial or attached to a religious or politically biased institution. STAR Radio could and did complement this spectrum with news and information from other angles. The station has been essential for the building of democracy, peace and reconciliation in Liberia in the post-election period. This is because of its independence and its ability to broadcast stories that other news media could not touch. This strengthened the various civil society organizations. However, some Liberians did feel that, instead of building STAR Radio, existing local stations should have been supported directly.

STAR Radio was built upon an idea about partnership with NGOs and civil society associations concerned with human rights, children and women's issues. The programmes of the station were intended to reinforce the activities of such organizations, an example being the UN-FAO 'telefood' funding campaign. The tracing programme in particular was extremely popular and brought numerous lost family members together. STAR Radio offered free services for the international humanitarian agencies. The idea was that, in the future, STAR Radio would offer the agencies a 'communication component', which would be a paid service. In this way, the station would generate income in exchange for services. However, that is still donor funding, but now indirectly in exchange for services, although the income would still come from donors rather than, for example, commercial clients. Both UNDP and UNHCR responded favourably to this idea, but it did not take off because of the closure of the station. Sida's approach has been very supportive of this coherence and it has stuck to principles rather than bureaucratic rules. Thus, in its assessment of STAR Radio, Sida has been emphasizing that the aim is to secure the principle of freedom of speech in Liberia, in contrast to USAID and NEDA, who in this case emphasize that their rules of releasing funds are kept.

### 3.4 Connectedness

The objective of making the STAR Radio sustainable is outlined in the transition plans towards Liberian ownership. The inclusion of such plans in the project outline is in itself a positive feature of STAR Radio. However, if it were not for the closure, these plans would have moved the station much further into Liberian control by now. Concerning legal ownership, it is stated in the contracts that the donated assets are controlled by the donor until the end of the project and are then turned over to local institutions. This was a condition set down by USAID standard policies. Thus, the radio was initially registered as Hironnelle Foundation, and was first in June 1999 registered as the legal entity 'STAR Radio'. Still, the GoL closed down the station in March 2000, claiming that it was not a Liberian-owned radio station. The next step, however, was to make STAR Radio self-sustained. Local income generation was therefore explored. For instance, STAR wanted to make programmes for the non-governmental sector in order to reinforce their work. Just before the closure, the idea of personal contributions to the station was also worked on.

From 1997 to June 1999, the radio was under expatriate management, and since then it has come under Liberian management. The previous expatriates were replaced with only one expatriate consultant. It is now managed and controlled by Liberians. HF is still responsible for funding. The next development was to make the signature of the consultant unnecessary for endorsing changes. However, this transition has to be gradual and must be based on donor confidence. In Liberia today, donors generally involve expatriates in order to deter any seizure or misappropriation of project assets (which, according to contract, belong to the donors). However, the sustainability plans do describe the intended transition of STAR Radio into a local institution. IFES grants ended this year, and the equipment was to be turned over to the STAR Radio board of directors. USAID, which had the authority over the assets, did authorize IFES to turn them over to STAR Radio, but the closure of the station prevented the realization of that. However, the conflict with the GoL on the ownership issue reveals a misconception on part of the GoL in that it is equating assets with ownership. In fact, the entity STAR Radio is 'owned' by its board of directors, which was formed in January 1998. However, the hidden agenda of the GoL is likely to be an effort at quelling the only nongovernmental radio station capable of broadcasting to the rural areas. This is an unfortunate situation, which is complicating STAR Radio's contribution to building peace in Liberia.

### 3.5 Donor flexibility and location of responsibility

Under the agreement between Sida and HF, the division of responsibility and labour is quite clear. The responsibility of implementing the project rests solely with HF. HF is responsible for reporting, for contact with Sida over any changes and for handling any crises that may occur with the project.

However, there is no mention of the local partners' responsibilities in the agreement; it is entirely up to HF to set up its own arrangement with the local participants. In this way, there is no doubt where the final responsibility lies as far as the donor is concerned. Unfortunately, this may have contributed to the suspicions of the GoL over STAR Radio's being owned/controlled by foreign powers. In principle, the lack of mention of the local partners could have been an obstacle for the sustainability and transfer of ownership of the project, because Sida, as things appear, funds a HF project and not an independent Liberian radio station. Fortunately, Sida can be commended for its flexibility on the ownership issue, in letting HF handle the ownership conflict and in the setting up of the transfer process.

Generally, Sida has been very flexible towards the project in all phases, and communication has been informally channelled through the Swedish embassy in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. Sida has been very understanding towards the present situation with the closure of the station. While the primary objective of the station is on hold because of the closure, the secondary role is still there as STAR radio represents a vital symbolic institution of freedom of speech in Liberia. Sida recognized this secondary objective. Sida's approach has in this case been more focused on principle than on output (rather than outcome). They were interested in the means of achieving the output.

### 3.6 Success criteria and reflective action

The first project application, which Sida received in 1998 for funding STAR Radio in 1999, contained a quite clear and structured formulation of the aims and thus the benchmarks for the project. The overall goal and objectives were related to the longer term of the project beyond the fiscal year of 1999 for which the specific application was made. The goal was to address an imbalance of biased and partisan media services through a national and regional service providing factual and objective information. The latter is closely related to the objective of disseminating independent, impartial, rigorous and pertinent information on the situation in Liberia and Sierra Leone.<sup>5</sup> The assumption involved a precondition, namely that the success was contingent on the political situation in Liberia allowing for the restoration of the SW concession and work authorizations for the expatriate staff.

The precondition for broadcasting independent, impartial, rigorous and pertinent information is that staff and journalists are trained in covering issues in an unbiased and impartial manner, and from several perspectives. STAR Radio already had build and trained such a staff base of 38 journalists. The other radio stations – with the exception of Liberia Broadcasting Corporation (LBC) – cover Monrovia well, but not the rural areas, and STAR Radio was the only station extensively covering news from the rural areas. STAR Radio broadcast news in the 14 local languages, which LBC also does. Thus, the area of dissemination extended into the rural areas. Correspondents in the counties gathered information and news from the rural areas and sent it to Monrovia. This information flow was facilitated in cooperation with NGOs operating in the rural areas that allowed STAR correspondents to use their radio and communication facilities. However, this network was a weakness since it was dependent on the goodwill of mainly the international NGOs.

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<sup>5</sup> This evaluation did not have capacity to assess the part of the project concerning Sierra Leone.

A continuation of STAR Radio will have to improve this aspect in order to function on its own. The challenge is to get around to all the rural areas, which are very difficult to access because of poor and deteriorating infrastructure.

The strategy to promote peacebuilding, reconciliation and conflict prevention was to cover all of Liberia geographically and socially – i.e. in every corner of the country and every level of society, from grassroots to the top hierarchy. STAR Radio did give a voice to the common man, the poorest neighbourhoods, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and peasants. It covered their issues, and gave air to them whereby an important aspect and necessary dialogue for democracy was facilitated.

In the event of acute crisis, the station could and did avoid panic and escalations of conflict by disseminating objective information. For instance, during the September 1998 incident in Monrovia, STAR Radio was able to minimize panic by its ability to make almost direct transmissions informing the public about where the safe places were so they could move there for safety. In another case, an important politician disappeared, which gave rise to a lot of suspicion, not at least against the government, which was accused of being implicated in his disappearance. STAR Radio followed up on the story, and its reporters managed to reach the politician and air an interview with him. The government, in particular, was relieved to hear his voice.

To many Liberians, STAR Radio was a ‘place of rescue’ when they had a problem. They would come to STAR Radio first to test their case. Often, the radio staff had to redirect them to the right place. For instance, teachers with problems of not getting paid came to the station complaining. STAR Radio staff asked them whether they had first spoken to the Ministry of Education. They had not and were encouraged to do that first. In this way, awareness of democratic action can be disseminated. Sensitization has also been important, as has mobilization of public communities to look after themselves through intensive coverage of ‘self help’ activities initiated by communities themselves – in that way, people were able to learn from other people how they could do things themselves; STAR showed how communities could take initiatives by themselves instead of just waiting for the international community to do it for them.

Reporters travelled to refugee camps in the neighbouring countries; through this, they brought relief to family members back in Liberia. This facilitated reconciliation, by demystifying assumptions that people had died when they had in fact survived, and thereby eased feelings of anger against the perceived perpetrators. In cooperation with Save the Children and the Liberian National Red Cross, a programme was established with an extended tracing service. This brought numerous family members together, which again presumably facilitated reconciliation by relieving feelings of anxiety, anger and revenge. When the station closed, there was an exceptionally unified civil society response. The Press Union of Liberia supported STAR Radio, together with other civil society organizations, ranging from professional organizations to the catholic Justice and Peace Commission. If the impact on the masses had not been positive, then the temporary closure would have meant the death of the station. Instead a massive support for the station materialized in print and on other radio stations. STAR Radio has been facilitative in the process of building democracy. This was done by educating people and authorities about their rights, sticking to a journalistic principle of viewing all news and events from many perspectives, whereby people learn to better judge the news themselves, and finally by broadcasting information about what legislature and judiciary actually are and do. According to interviews, STAR Radio is seen as symbolic for the struggle for peace, democracy and good governance. The closure has thus become a learning lesson in itself and an important part of the reconciliation process.

### 3.7 Institutional competence

Training of staff and journalists has been a central activity since the onset of the radio station. The training was not only aimed at making news but also at general programme management. HF has emphasized that the editorial board is both qualified and primarily made up of local people. First, this consisted of one member from the Press Union of Liberia, one from Radio Monrovia, one from the programme 'Common Ground' and two from HF. These met once a month to comment on programmes and their conformity with the principles of the radio charter. Now the HF members have been pulled out.

The expatriate chief of project and other expatriates are described as very well qualified in their field of work. Their work in establishing a well-functioning and highly qualified radio station can in overall terms be viewed as successful. The project ended up with a local staff team of one administrative coordinator, two journalists (one in charge of training and the other in charge of developing collaboration with the humanitarian agencies), 38 journalists and 24 support staff. Early this year, on 28 February, USAID reduced its funding to STAR Radio, which meant that STAR had to cut 50% of its staff and drop one programme. The news department became incorporated into the 'Production Department', and half of the journalists, drivers and support staff were dismissed. The dismissed staff may eventually contribute to a free media in Liberia, provided the existing radio stations have the financial means to make use of them.

## 4. Bridges to Peace

### 4.1 Project background and overview

Among the range of atrocities endured by the Liberian population, women have been prime targets. But, in a number of cases, women have assumed leadership roles demonstrating immense resilience, fortitude and wisdom. This could contribute to an irreversible change in the role and perception of women in Liberian society. Some women activists also coordinated their responses to this suffering, and one such response was the Liberian Women's Initiative (LWI). LWI was instrumental in drawing attention to the plight of women, by channelling the views of women to national and international mediators and in representing women in local, national and international peace negotiations. It was three leading members of LWI that conceived the idea about the 'Bridges to Peace' project during the April 1996 crisis. They found that because women know when something is 'brewing' – a conflict coming up – they are also able to react early in order to prevent an escalation of it. So, the concept of going into communities to work with active women and community leaders was conceived.

The relevance was that conflicts often escalated from the communities through being interpreted by people in terms of the larger ethnically related conflicts. Many conflicts could be avoided if women could intervene and solve small-scale conflicts, family feuds, etc. at an early stage, so that the conflict resolution is kept at the relevant level – i.e. domestic conflicts should not be perceived in the context of a larger ethnic conflict. If women could be strengthened to intervene in family-, local- and community-level conflicts, much confusion and conflict escalation may thus be prevented. By providing them with skills to deal with traumas from the civil war and to enable reconciliation between local people who had been pitted against each other due to the war, these women

could be a vital force in rehabilitating local communities into again becoming well-functioning societies. Thus, the idea was to go to the communities in order to identify potential women participants for the peace and reconciliation workshops. Because poverty often overrides the necessary human resources that enable women to engage constructively in reconciliation efforts, LWI found that it was important to help the women become economically active to relieve them of debilitating economic burdens. Thus, a microcredit scheme was suggested as an accompaniment to the 'Bridges to Peace' project. The first project proposal was submitted to the UN in July 1996. UNHCR decided to support the 'Bridges to Peace' pilot project from September 1997 until February 1998. The first five communities identified to take part in the pilot project were found in the Monrovia area. Two of these were IDP centres. The criterion for being chosen was that the communities must have a composition with a high potential for conflicts.

Conciliation Resources (CR) came into the picture in connection with the elections in August 1997, when LWI sought out various donor agencies for further funding. The UK Department for International Development (DfID) was interested and funded the civic education component. It was DfID who brought Conciliation Resources on board, because DfID policies required that the grant recipient was an International NGO (INGO). The European Union and NORAD funded the programme on voter education. CR then helped to find funding for the remaining projects ('Bridges to Peace' and the microcredit programme), and thus Sida came into the picture as a donor. The project proposal from 1997 was worked out together with CR's regional co-coordinator Frances Fortune. Together with her, LWI wrote a proposal for the extension and continuance of the pilot project, which led to Sida's funding the 'Bridges to Peace' programme in the fiscal year of 1998. Unfortunately, problems within LWI put a halt to the project. It did not take off because of a leadership and organizational crisis. Both were connected to the transition of LWI from a voluntary membership-based association advocating and lobbying for peace into an actual organization. With the discreet intervention of CR, the incorrect use of funds was stopped, and funding came to a halt until LWI had sorted out its internal problems. LWI held a convention and elected a new leadership, which eventually solved the problems. The project could then recommence in June 1999. The 'Bridges to Peace' project was rescheduled to end in August 2000. The recommenced project expanded on the pilot project by including four more communities in Monrovia, five in the rural area of Southeast Liberia and two in Lofa County. The project managed to carry through two workshops in Lofa before that part of the project had to be suspended because of recurring incursions in that county.

## 4.2 Appropriateness

Sida did not have to make any further independent analysis of the situation in Liberia in order to assess the appropriateness of the proposed projects because the outlined proposal was quite clear and fitted the existing knowledge Sida possessed about Liberia at the time. Conciliation Resources has been working within the region, notably in the connected and neighbouring conflict in Sierra Leone, and had extensive knowledge of both conflicts. Sida took CR's situation and needs assessment for granted and did little else explore the project prior to the grant.

During the internal crisis of LWI, Sida was informed via the CR consultants who intervened at the time. Sida even sent the desk officer for the project from Stockholm to Monrovia in order to assess the situation (see section 4.5 below). After the crisis, there were no amendments to the initial project outline. The only change was to limit the timeframe of the project, which actually proved to be an advantage. Because of time constraints, project workers had to work harder and in a more focused way. In this way, they actually gained confidence in themselves when they realized that it was possible for them to carry out the project in less time.

Another constraint was that it took more time to transfer funding than expected, owing to the poor communication lines in Liberia. To communicate with CR is difficult and expensive. The question is not whether one has a phone or not, but whether there is electricity or not. CR sends the funds to a bank account. But it can take weeks to get the money out, because the banks want to keep the funds as long as possible. Sometimes the UN helped with communication lines, and they have also been networking with the international agencies.

However, if Sida had spent more resources on assessing the two projects presented to them, namely the ‘Bridges to Peace’ and the microcredit scheme, the latter could possibly have been amended. In this way, Sida would have been in a better position to understand the function of the microcredit scheme in relation to the ‘Bridges to Peace’ project. The lack of an economic component to support the sustainability of the ‘Bridges to Peace’ programme in the communities was evident. It showed, because when people are poor and hungry and their children are sick and need medication, it is difficult for them to sit and talk peace. The microcredit scheme, which was not funded, would have helped immensely. On the other hand, other microcredit schemes in Liberia have not been entirely successful. Retrospectively, the argument is that Sida could have done better by amending the microcredit scheme into a more feasible project.

### **4.3 Coherence**

The LWI projects incorporate high levels of external coherence where relevant. They have especially been drawing on the experience and expertise of other international and local NGOs both for training and in facilitating the workshops. Thus, the International Foundation for Education and Self-Help (IFESH) worked with project staff in developing a manual for training in peace and reconciliation. LWI members benefited a lot from that process. Furthermore, IFESH – together with the local NGOs Center for Democratic Empowerment (CEDE) and New African Research and Development Agency (NARDA) – facilitated several ‘training of trainers’ (ToT) programmes together with LWI. The United Methodist Church Relief Committee (UMCOR) has been doing similar projects with local communities, and consideration towards that has been taken.

Before LWI entered new local communities, it first identified existing women’s groups. If there were no groups to work with, LWI would suggest that the women create one. Some of the women’s groups that benefited from the ‘Bridges to Peace’ programme were SEWODA, Woman Development Association of Liberia (WODAL) and Lofa Women Development Association.

The ‘Bridges to Peace’ programme is closely interconnected with the other LWI activities. Thus, in LWI’s peacebuilding and reconciliation process, the ‘Bridges to Peace’ workshops should be seen in conjunction with the other components, especially the illiteracy component and the civil education programme, which both are bringing communities together.

### **4.4 Connectedness**

In the rural areas, women are the most active in wanting literacy and school programmes and are most enthusiastic about getting involved in rebuilding their societies. An important factor here is the war, which resulted in women becoming heads of households. Furthermore, because they risked getting killed, men were afraid to go out during the conflict, and therefore women started long-distance trading. Uneducated women became much more involved in controlling their lives than before. They discovered they had abilities in what were to them new areas of trade, which previously was dominated by men. In this way, they gained, or maintained, more self-confidence than men generally did. In this context, LWI found it important to build upon the continuance of these

newly acquired capacities among rural women. LWI sees itself as a symbol of such processes, and asserted that its strength was that women found LWI belonged to them and was not just another elitist project. It was crucial to LWI not to impose the projects on people. The ideas raised at the workshops had to come from the communities themselves. Some communities did articulate their needs and feelings quite clearly. But, according to LWI, if a project is imposed then it dies very fast. LWI was very conscious about dependency syndrome, a result of too much and too long dependence on relief aid. LWI was based on membership and volunteers only. That spirit has been fundamental for the feeling of ownership in its projects. This is very important for the maintenance of the integrity of LWI, a fact that CR has understood. CR seems to have avoided 'taking over' the implementation of the projects of LWI, hence avoiding a common phenomenon within relief work in Liberia. When international agencies 'take over', or dominate their local implementing partners, they often risk undermining the local ownership feeling of the relief work and thus its 'connectedness' in the long term. Therefore, it is paramount to the LWI projects that the women do have a sense of ownership of the programmes. It is, however, too early to say how successful this aspect of the projects have been, because economic hardship deprives the women of a sense of their capacity to follow up on the workshops. They therefore tend to see it as the responsibility of LWI in Monrovia.

The project is vulnerable in terms of sustainability. The basic problem in Liberia in this connection is the high level of illiteracy, which is worst amongst women. That is changing now, but there is still a high drop-out rate: up to 50% of all girls drop out of school. Coupled with the fact that civil war devastated the country, people lost everything, and most people had to start all over again, this was the background for the microcredit scheme, which was not funded. It is difficult to assess whether such a scheme would have made any difference. However, freeing some of the local women leaders of some of their everyday burdens should be addressed as a criterion for success.

Finally, the LWI and their projects such as 'Bridges to Peace' do rely too much on the capacity of intermediary grant recipient INGOs such as CR. It is CR that has the capacity to write proposals and maintain contact with the donors. The inability of local partners to raise funds is an inhibition to long-term sustainability.

## **4.5 Gender equality**

It is one of the paradoxes of violent civil conflicts that women often suffer most but come out stronger and with higher self-esteem than men after the war ends. LWI is an example of this and is, by virtue of its origin and identity, a female-gender organization. LWI's project focuses almost entirely on strengthening the role of women in society in general, and in building peace and preventing conflict more specifically. The reason for targeting women specifically is that when the women (mothers) benefit, then the rest of the family does so as well, and that is conducive for domestic as well as community-level peace.

Despite this, LWI consciously involved male consultants and facilitators in order to ensure the quality of its projects in areas where it acknowledged that it did not possess the right expertise. Furthermore, it has been crucial for the success of the project that men, especially elders and chiefs who usually are males, were also involved in the workshops. Without that endorsement and understanding, it could be even more difficult for the women to realize their experiences from the workshops. According to the reports from some of the workshops, the participating men often left with far more respect for what women can do to reconcile their split communities.

## 4.6 Flexibility

Flexibility on the part of the donor and grant recipient may be the way of ensuring successful peace support projects. The flexibility of both Sida and CR was tested during the internal crisis of LWI. The crisis emerged at a point when LWI was in transition from volunteer advocacy group in the context of armed conflict to an organization engaging peace and reconciliation projects in a postwar context. In this process, the executive council lost track of its responsibilities. The organization of LWI grew too fast for the capacity of its leadership. LWI was originally a lobby group for peace. Having accomplished that, it had to face the ‘building’ of that peace. Thus, the lobby group transformed itself into an organization. There were new roles and responsibilities, lack of clarity over division of labour and responsibilities, and the skills for these new roles were not yet present. CR and Sida intervened in that period to ensure that the funds were not misappropriated in the midst of the personal feuds of the crisis. But after a conference was held, which established a newly defined organizational structure with an official constitution, the disputes eventually settled.

Because CR had a hands-on role at the beginning of the project, it could, and did intervene discreetly. The consultants from CR in London came to Monrovia and were very constructive in solving the problems. Despite criticism of CR for being heavy handed, CR seems to have managed the crisis fairly well. CR informed Sida that it found the problems could be solved, supported the process and engaged itself in solving them. Sida also sent a person from its Division of Humanitarian Assistance to Monrovia. This intervention by Sida was seen as positive and constructive.

## 4.7 Location of responsibility

The division of labour between the donor, the grant recipient and implementing partner is very similar to that of STAR Radio. Sida is the donor, while Conciliation Resources is the grant recipient and holds the responsibilities towards Sida. CR is also responsible for reporting to Sida and assists LWI with evaluation reports and with seeking funding. Apart from some advice and training inputs to project leaders, CR has not been directly involved in the ‘Bridges to Peace’ project. Furthermore, CR did not make use of expatriates, except for the period when Frances Fortune was residing in Monrovia, which she did because of the situation in Sierra Leone where she was stationed. Thus, LWI is entirely responsible for implementing its projects. This is a very good feature of the ‘Bridges to Peace’ project. The division of labour proved to work fine during the internal crisis of LWI, where Sida entrusted CR to work out a solution, which resulted in the withholding of funds until LWI itself had solved its crisis.

## 4.8 Pressure for success/possible failure

The main benchmark set up for the success of the ‘Bridges to Peace’ project was that the participating women would take up responsibility for building peace and reconciliation in their communities. The main aim was to increase the capacities of Liberian women as postwar bridge builders for sustainable peace and reconciliation. The main method was to train cadres of women in community dialogue and conflict prevention and solving techniques.

The initial project was confined to 14 communities, which is not so many considering the size of Liberia and the magnitude of the problems. On the other hand, the 14 were almost out of the reach of the capacity of LWI. The prospect is that the project shall expand, and hopefully this will be carried out by the participants themselves. The workshops in Lofa contributed to the realization by the participating women that, in order to gain peace between neighbouring ethnic groups, they must combine their forces to prevent conflicts between them. For instance, they decided that they

would rent warehouses to store products together and share common means of transporting goods to Monrovia. This process was unfortunately halted by the dissident incursions into Lofa, from Sierra Leone in 1999 and Guinea in July 2000. In Nimba County, women similarly decided to form farming cooperatives. It is interesting that the most powerful means of bringing the groups together is endeavours into cooperative integration through engagement in common production, shared rehabilitation of destroyed buildings, schools and clinics, etc. By rebuilding the communities together, a sense of shared values can be created which subsequently generates a community-wide sense of responsibility and protection of the shared values. Thus, the small projects of uniting people in cooperatives emerged some places. One group decided to make soup kitchens, put their funds together and eventually made soup kitchens on a cooperative basis. If a former fighter was in the community, and perhaps known to have killed or raped someone from the community, the women had to learn how to deal with that. Bringing the ex-combatants into shared work is in this way important for peacebuilding at the local community level. Since LWI did not have funds to support such activities, they asked local and international NGOs to assist with that. Thus, WFP supports with food for work activities, and some INGOs have funded a few projects. But, the current threat of sanctions (because of Liberia's alleged involvement in the Sierra Leonean diamond war) will reduce funding for such programmes.

#### **4.9 Institutional competence**

A key point for the long-term value of a project is whether it leads to the development of an institutional competence within its field of activity. Thus, the relevant points of evaluation are the extent to which experienced staff existed at the beginning of the project, the extent of training of new people in the relevant skills and the opportunities for staff to continue within the field after the end of the project. The members of LWI at the beginning of the project were generally well-educated, capable women of the mainly urban-based Monrovia civil society. They did not possess the right skills to run the projects, nor were they sufficiently skilled in running an organization that supposedly should have the capacity to run projects. This was one of the reasons for the internal crisis of LWI. However, the members learned a lot from the political and organizational restructuring exercise. Training of the project leaders and participants was carried out and was crucial for the ability of LWI to carry out the projects. So the combination of training in workshops and 'learning by doing' was the main way of acquiring individual competence. Thus, training workshops and networking experiences benefited both paid staff and the volunteers. A total of 450 women have been attending such workshops. They even ended up training men as well. The workshops were carried out at county level and incorporated the local authorities; and, at the village levels, they included the district and town chiefs as well. In most cases, the women were very eager to continue and use their newly acquired knowledge and skills and wished that new workshops be conducted in the future. It is difficult as yet to see how many women on their own will try to take similar initiatives locally. The apparent obstacle is that most women will find it difficult to find time and resources for such activities because they first of all must tend to the sustenance of their own families' lives.

## 5. Conclusion

### 5.1 STAR Radio

STAR radio failed in its immediate goal of contributing to a level playing field up to the elections of 1997, although, up to its closure by the GoL in March 2000, it did become the most popular independent radio station in Liberia and did contribute substantially to the creation of a balanced news media by broadcasting impartial and pertinent news and information. The evaluation of this case points towards the following main conclusions:

- The need of a station such as STAR Radio in the Liberian situation is evident, and confirms the *appropriateness* of the project. However, the unclear ownership issue made the project vulnerable to government intervention.
- This raises the point that in a case where there are several donors it becomes more difficult for donors to address problems in the project. The result is often that donors have little contact with the projects, and support therefore often takes the character of an ‘à la carte menu’ from which preferred projects can be chosen.
- When Sida decided to support STAR Radio via the Hironnelle Foundation (HF) for the fiscal year of 1999, it accepted the project proposal at face value without any major amendments. Retrospectively, it can be questioned whether the closure of the radio station could have been avoided if, for instance, Sida had addressed the ownership issue at once. Therefore, desk officers may have to be better equipped to assess projects, even on the ground if necessary.
- STAR Radio was a very *coherent* project – consciously relating itself to the needed gaps in the biased Liberian media and providing a media outlet for humanitarian and peacebuilding activities. Sida’s principled support – placing value on ensuring freedom of speech in Liberia over bureaucratic regulations on whether a contract is fulfilled or not – has contributed to the survival of STAR Radio – so far.
- *Connectedness*: The importance of local ownership of projects is emphasized by the STAR Radio project. Sustainability of STAR Radio could have been achieved by establishing connections with the GoL, which simultaneously might have secured the station from closure. On the other hand, such connections would undermine the rationale of the station (i.e. providing people with unbiased information and news and a level playing field in the case of political elections). While the actions of the GoL by closing the station was self-fulfilling, because this delayed the transfer of ownership of STAR Radio, they also illuminated the rationality of keeping the rule that assets of a project belongs to the donor as long as the project is funded by that donor – because that may be the only way to safeguard a project in a politically volatile climate.

### 5.2 ‘Bridges to Peace’

Because of internal conflict and problems experienced by the local implementing partner, LWI, the ‘Bridges to Peace’ project did not take off until late 1999. The need for reconciliation and peacebuilding in Liberia was evident, and the idea of focusing on the role of women in this connection was very relevant. The project idea was entirely Liberian, and Conciliation Resources (CR) merely facilitated funding for the project and assisted writing project proposals. The evaluation of this case points towards the following main conclusions:

- While the project in principle was very *appropriate* to the circumstances in Liberia, LWI did not initially have the capacity to carry it out. Furthermore, the focus on the microcredit scheme, which was not funded, did raise the issue of whether the most important aspect was the possible results of the workshops or rather the different focus on aiding women with traditional developmental schemes.
- Despite the fact that the economic burdens of women in Liberia are very high, Sida may have been right in their decision not to support the microcredit scheme that LWI wanted to accompany 'Bridges to Peace'. The reason was, first, that the capacity of LWI to administer a scheme like that was doubtful. Second, the women may have been interested in such a scheme for reasons that had nothing to do with reconciliation. The problem is that the circumstances of poverty that prevail in Liberia can provide the ones with access to funds with an extra additional value, that is the power of being able recruit somebody together with the legitimization effects this has on one's authority at the local level. But, LWI largely avoided this phenomenon, mainly by making use of volunteers.
- The generation of a sense of *local ownership* of projects is crucial to their success. To achieve this, LWI first had to deal with the problem of a general lack of initiative, a problem of both war trauma and relief dependency. LWI was very conscious about this aspect and knew that it must not take over the workshops, which would have undermined the participants. Instead, the LWI facilitators' task was to make the participants themselves open up and take ownership of the workshops. Projects such as 'Bridges to Peace' are only relevant if they can build on the existing capacities of women.
- The *flexibility* of Sida and CR during the crisis of LWI ensured the continuation of the project through their discreet intervention. By not cancelling the grant, but withholding it until LWI had solved its problems, they encouraged the women to find a solution and not give up.
- The point made by LWI that the success of the projects would have been greater if the microcredit scheme, or something similar, had also been funded is debatable. It is obvious that women carry the larger burden and workload, and it is also interesting that reconciliation can be achieved through shared community rehabilitation and rebuilding of facilities such as schools and markets. On the other hand, it may not be an advantage that assistance to such projects is channelled through the organization that facilitates the peace and reconciliation workshops because that may alter its rationale and instead it may become an income-generating facility.
- The *institutional competence* is related to the above factor as well. While the Training of Trainers and the workshops do provide the participants with new skills, these are of no use if the circumstances of life prevents participants from ever making use of them.
- Projects such as 'Bridges to Peace' do rely too much on the capacity of intermediary grant recipient INGOs such as CR. It is CR that has the capacity to write proposals and maintain contact with the donors. The inability of local partners to raise funds is an inhibition to long-term sustainability. It should be emphasized that in terms of *connectedness*, STAR Radio was a donor-initiated project, while LWI's 'Bridges to Peace' project originated from LWI itself.

## 6. List of people consulted

Conmany Wesseh, Director, Center for Democratic Empowerment

Dusty Wolekollie, Programme Manager, International Foundation for Education & Self Help

Elizabeth Mulbah, Managing Director, Rural Housing Project, UNDP

Etweda Cooper, Secretary General, Liberian Women Initiative

Evelyn Kandakai, Minister of Education, Government of Liberia

Gregory Kintz, Technical Consultant, Hironnelle Foundation/STAR Radio

Jallah Lone, Paramount Chief

James G. Kiazolu, Vice President, Press Union of Liberia

James Moorlu, Journalist and Chairman of the Board, STAR Radio

James Verdier, Attorney At Law, Justice and Peace Commission

James Yarsiah, Assistant Programme Coordinator, Lutheran World Federation/Service

Mary Brownell, Chairwoman, Liberian Women Initiative

Michael, CEDE, ToT facilitator in Lofa County

Richmond Draper, Chairman, New African Research & Development Agency

## 7. Reviewed material

- Project proposals and final reports from the Hironnelle Foundation and Conciliation Resources.
- Grant agreements between Sida and Hironnelle Foundation and between Sida and Conciliation Resources.
- Audience Survey of the Foundation Hironnelle STAR Radio Project, Monrovia, July 1999.
- Quarterly reports from LWI on the 'Bridges to Peace' project.
- Draft Memorandum of understanding between LWI and CR.
- Report from ToT Workshop held in Ganta, Nimba County, 24–28 April 2000.

## **Annex 4**

### **Case study on South Africa: Diakonia in terms of its contribution to conflict resolution and peacebuilding**

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# 1. Introduction

This report is one of five component studies chosen for the evaluation of Sida projects of conflict management and peacebuilding. The chosen projects in this study are Sida-funded projects with Diakonia-South Africa. Under the umbrella ‘Conflict Transformation’, the 7 of the 20 projects selected are post-conflict and peacebuilding organizations that work within a context in which political peace has been established, but social and criminal violence is still very much a part of everyday life. As such, conflict resolution, conflict management and peace building implicitly and explicitly permeate their agendas.

Diakonia supported a wide range of projects under the umbrella ‘Conflict Transformation’ under the Democracy Programme 1997–99. Diakonia expanded its portfolio of partner organizations by taking over projects previously directly funded by Sida. Diakonia is today managing some 20 organizations. This approach was in concordance with the Sida strategy to channel support to democracy and human rights through larger partner organizations working on human rights and democracy issues in South Africa with an emphasis on dialogue and mutual understanding. Through this Programme for Democracy, peacebuilding, democratization, and respect for human rights share a place in the interplay between the state and civil society.

## 1.1 Methodology and Selection Criteria

Sida in its ‘Arbetspapper 1998–99’ initially selected the projects and organizations supported through Diakonia under the heading conflict resolution. After discussions with Sida and Diakonia in Stockholm and Pretoria, the team decided to make changes and to cover both projects that have been phased out and projects that are being continued.

The team carried out field visits to seven Diakonia partner organizations:

1. Victory Sonqoba Theatre Company, Alexandria
2. Centre for Study of Violence and Reconciliation, Johannesburg (interview in Pretoria)
3. Diakonia Council of Churches, Durban
4. Network of Independent Monitors, Durban
5. Project for Conflict Resolution, Port Elisabeth
6. Centre for Conflict Resolution: Saamspaan project, Cape Town
7. UMAC: RDP project, Cape Town

These projects and programmes were chosen to cover a broad spectrum of organizational structures, approaches, methodologies, and human resources and capacities within the field of conflict resolution. The purpose was to provide ‘lessons learned’ by reviewing each organization’s own capacities and limits, and to provide analysis of the approach and methodology used by the different organizations in relation to the criteria selected in the inception report.

It must be emphasized that the team only had only about ten days for the entire exercise. The study is therefore not an exhaustive evaluation of the different organizations. The descriptions of the projects only relate to such items and parts that are of importance for this study. Many of the organizations studied have activities that do not fall under conflict management and peacebuilding, and such parts of their activities have not been covered by this study. It should also be mentioned that Sida support to the organizations is usually not earmarked for any specific part of their pro-

gramme portfolio. This makes it difficult to establish clear connections between the activities in the area of peacebuilding and conflict management and Sida funding.

Our reflections are therefore based upon document review and upon interviews with key stakeholders at Sida, Diakonia and the partner organizations. In some cases, the team conducted community field visits in order to gain more knowledge of individual projects. This unfortunately was not possible in every case owing to an extremely tight time schedule and the large number of organizations to be visited.

## **2. Background to the Projects and Overview of the Political Landscape**

Conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts in South Africa are complex. Since the end of apartheid and the signing of the National Peace Accord in September 1991, NGOs and donor agencies have had to shift their priorities because of the changing political conditions in South Africa. While initially concerned primarily with violations of human rights, they now must contend with more socially motivated violence that arises from poverty, unemployment, lack of education and challenges to traditional leadership.

The Diakonia programmes are of two kinds. Some were projects that Sida supported before the new South Africa emerged and that were subsequently handed over to be managed by Diakonia after the transition to a new South Africa. Other programmes have been added to the Diakonia portfolio as the NGOs have developed since the transition. All the projects strive to alleviate tensions in South Africa. They are mostly community based, and they see themselves as serving the objectives of a South Africa in transition. The projects were originally perceived as falling within the ambit of democracy and human rights.

In order to assess the Diakonia partnership organizations and the way these organizations adapt both to changing needs of the communities they serve and new priorities set by the donors, one must recognize that NGOs and CBOs in South Africa face a number of difficulties.

Of critical importance is the abundance of NGOs seeking funding. There is not a sufficient growth of local funding to compensate for the withdrawal of international donors. NGOs are also faced with changing donor priorities, and these naturally have an impact on organizations that do not have the capacity or the willingness to change direction.

Funding is not the only problem facing NGOs, who have often seen their human resources depleted, especially in the area of competent and visionary leadership as prominent leaders have been absorbed into the new government structures. There is increasing competition from government and business for skilled and experienced people from previously disadvantaged groups. NGOs usually are not able to offer competitive remuneration packages for people with sufficient levels of expertise and experience, who expect to be paid on levels commensurate with the public sector or business.

The new government has taken over tasks previously assigned to and driven by NGOs. NGOs have therefore assumed more of a watchdog role, supporting government in service delivery where they can or criticizing failures where and when they occur. Some NGOs are also offering training for

mainly local government politicians so that these can better fulfil their roles and responsibilities. In the new South Africa, such roles are not always accepted or well understood by the government.

This fight for survival siphons energy from many NGOs, as they must use increasing resources for funding purposes. They gradually learn to please various donors that do not have a common view of what they wish to fund. Not only does this dissipate the energies of NGO personnel who must continually shift their priorities; it also begs the question of organizational integrity in the quest for necessary support.

Finally, in the new South Africa, there is also an increasing demand placed on the NGOs by donors and clientele to show results, while during the previous regime it was sometimes enough merely to continue to exist. This does not imply that the NGOs were necessarily ineffective at that time, but rather that they are not used to being answerable for results achieved.

## **2.1 The Connection to Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution.**

At the birth of the new South Africa, the international donor community was committed to contributing to making the transition to the new South Africa a success story. No one, including the new leaders of South Africa, could count on the vision of a rainbow nation being able to handle all possible conflicts. On the contrary, violent action could not be ruled out on regional and local levels.

Six years after the emergence of the new South Africa, there are no organized conflicts between races, there are no regional and local conflicts based on deep-rooted and converging views between tribes (except in KwaZulu Natal, where the politicization of the traditional leadership is dominant), and there is no illicit arms trafficking supporting armed uprisings. However, there is organized and informal violence perpetrated by criminal gangs, vigilante groups and individual criminals or persons taking revenge for perceived grievances against others. In some instances, this violence is exacerbated by racial tensions, particularly between blacks and coloureds in places like the Cape Peninsula. South Africa is thus a violent nation. The violence is primarily internal, focused on organized and unorganized crime and the abuse of women and children.

In general, South Africa is an open society, allowing public and transparent debate. This may not be the case in neighbouring countries, where NGOs would not be allowed to take part in programmes and projects striving to create societies that are more peaceful. Nevertheless, in South Africa there is growing recognition of the need to confront the growing violence in the society.

There is also a recognition that the healing process after apartheid is far from over. The TRC has tried to uncover the atrocities of the past and to contribute to reconciliation. The government is trying to keep the debate about racism alive so that people of all races will reflect about their roles in maintaining racism in the past and in the present.

But even with all these efforts, there is a mounting anger and frustration among the disadvantaged groups because of what they perceive as the continuing unequal distribution of resources and the abuse of the disadvantaged. Disadvantaged groups of the South African society still suffer from past and present, real and perceived discrimination. Targets for violence are not only privileged whites but also affluent representatives of all races. Moreover, in the areas where the poor live, there is considerable criminal and social violence.

There is therefore a mounting need for life-skills development and mass education to improve the financial situation of impoverished families and as a means for enabling enhanced self-respect, with a view also to decreasing violence.

In terms of efforts to manage conflicts and promote peace, the Diakonia partner organizations today function within the society briefly described above, and they define the activities for peace-building and conflict resolution within this context. It would be strange otherwise. Therefore, Sida is funding organizations that try to ameliorate the primarily local conflicts and to reduce social violence. There is very little evidence that the projects have had any positive spill-over effects on other geographic areas, and the projects are not regarded as ‘shining examples’ for similar projects in South Africa. These conclusions do not change observations in this report that the projects themselves in isolation may be as positive as can reasonably be expected. Whether these efforts have more long-term and discernible impact on the local situation – in terms of connectedness – is one aspect that needs to be evaluated, but the project team for this study were allocated insufficient resources to do such in-depth assessments. Irrespective of the effects attained, a question for Sida is the extent to which support to the projects selected for this study is in line with present and future Sida strategies for support for conflict resolution and peacebuilding. It appears to us that there does not appear to be such a convergence of projects and funding strategies.

### **3. Project Summaries**

The following section aims to give a short presentation of each organization and to include some key lessons learned in the assessment. The projects and organizations are different in many ways, and range from highly institutionalized organizations, such as Diakonia Council of Churches and the Centre for Conflict Resolution, to smaller, locally based initiatives, such as the Victory Songqoba Theatre Company and the Urban Monitoring and Awareness Committee. The fact that the Diakonia portfolio includes such a diversity of organizations makes it difficult to compare them in a combined analysis. However, it creates an opportunity to assess several aspects of conflict resolution in South Africa. The multiplicity is also a valuable asset in the network facilitation provided for the organizations by Diakonia in order to learn from each other’s experiences.

A comprehensive presentation of all the Diakonia supported programmes can be found in an attachment – ‘Facts about the Organizations in Diakonia Democratization, Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Programs in South Africa’ – to the evaluation report ‘Zibambaleni? A Review of Sida’s Support to Diakonia for the Promotion of Peace-Building, Democratic Governance and Human Rights in South Africa 1997–1999 (Watson/Amnå, 1999).

The presentation below restricts itself to giving a sufficient overview to the reader in terms of activities within peacebuilding, conflict resolution, democracy and human rights. It should be noted that some of the organizations are also involved in a multitude of activities with little or no connection to the object of this study.

#### **3.1. Victory Songqoba Theatre Group, Alexandria Township, Johannesburg**

The organization is a non-profit theatre group based in Alexandria Township. It consists of an estimated 50 players, most of them victims as well as perpetrators of violence, being ex-combatants (either ANC or IPF) and/or ex-prisoners. In 1991, after the signing of the National Peace Accord, the Methodist Church brought the two conflicting parties together in an attempt to bridge the gap between them. The group was created with the intention of being an example of tolerance and to provide a forum for discussions between warring fractions through theatre.

The various plays performed by the theatre are written and developed by the artists themselves, often based on personal experiences. Theatre is used to raise debate and discussions in the workshops held after each performance. The first play, entitled *Divide and Rule*, has been performed in KwaZulu Natal, Belfast, Rwanda, Mozambique, Sarajevo and Palestine, and addresses the ways in which the right-wing security forces armed the Inkatha Freedom Party combatants to attack the squatter settlements and the ways in which the ANC responded to these actions.

In 1994, the focus of the struggle changed to crime, as ex-combatants joined gangs in townships and squatter camps. The theatre group, consisting of ex-prisoners, ex-hostel dwellers and ex-combatants, began to stage its plays in prisons in Johannesburg as well as among crime-prevalent youths in Soweto and Alexander townships. Now, the group is presenting a play about the legacy of a culture of violence and vengeance from the Zulu kings – a play presented in KwaZulu Natal, with dance and song taught by Zulus. Its intent is to challenge the curse of violent traditional leadership in the province. They have also staged plays about HIV–AIDS; five members of the theatre group (women and men) are HIV positive and talked to the audiences after these performances.

Finally, the group would like to work with the estimated 60 hostels in Gauteng (Johannesburg), where the residents are mostly men who were driven from KwaZulu Natal by poverty and who are competing for jobs in Johannesburg. As was pointed out to us, ‘The Eastern Cape and KwaZulu Natal are empty of men; they are looking for work in Johannesburg.’ Many buy weapons in Johannesburg, and at holiday-time, the homicide rate in KwaZulu Natal increases dramatically.

#### Key Lessons Learned:

- The use of theatre as a tool for conflict resolution and conflict prevention provides an informal space for discussions for and between different target groups in the community, such as prisoners, ex-combatants and schoolchildren. By allowing the audience to participate in workshops after the performances, sensitive themes are openly discussed under the supervision of qualified social workers. The advantages are that issues such as crime, violence, rape, political conflicts and AIDS reach exposed groups in the local communities in a language that can be understood by children as well as adults.
- The director and staff of the theatre group are highly committed to their work and performances. They also possess a high ambition level, in regard to target groups and geographical areas. However, there is a huge gap between the financial status/income prospects and the project proposals for the forthcoming years. Small projects and organizations need substantial help with their project management and will be dependent upon such help from the funding agency in order to develop realistic goals.

### 3.2 Centre for Study of Violence and Reconciliation

The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSV) was initially launched in January 1989 as the Project for the Study of Violence. It is a multi-disciplinary institute concerned with policy formation, implementation, service delivery, education and training, as well as providing consultancy services.

The primary goal of the CSV is to utilize its expertise in building reconciliation, democracy and a human rights culture within South African governance and society. The institute works with a wide range of organizations, constituencies and stakeholders in both the governmental and nongovernmental sectors.

CSVr has received funding from Sida through Diakonia for its Education and Media Unit. The first funding supported a video and pilot workshops in mostly all-white schools, dealing first with 'Conflict in the Schools'. When this topic was recognized as too broad, the unit focused on racism in the schools, with black students speaking about the difficulties they faced in both mostly all-white schools and when they returned home to the townships. One of the problems, admits the director, is that the success of this project depends on classroom teachers, many of whom are racists. (A CSVr programme to sensitize teachers to these issues has now commenced and is funded by Charles Stuart Mott.)

Another media project involves the videotaping of IFP and ANC ex-combatants speaking about their stories as a form of reconciliation; this also acts as an oral history project for the township schools. This was a two-year project, but once the South African Peace Committees broke down, there was not enough funding to continue. There were similar sustainability problems when the CSVr worked with the Theatre Group at prisons, but Sida/Diakonia withdrew the funds and the project collapsed. Nevertheless, the videos (of the ex-combatants and of the theatre group) became part of the 16 modules of a Reconciliation Package for working with communities of diverse ethnic and ideological backgrounds.

#### Key Lessons Learned:

- Projects are highly sensitive to the structural environment and political landscape in which they operate, and sustainability is difficult to obtain once the activity grows out of the responsibility of CSVr or becomes attached to fragile structures such as the Peace Committees. The preconditions for sustainability should be addressed when a new project is developed and reviewed in the operational process.
- There exists an expressed need for networks among actors operating in the field. Diakonia could structure themes on conflict resolution, peacebuilding and reconciliation, and coordinate partner organizations that could address these themes together. For example, the ex-combatant project could include issues of youth, trauma and reconciliation. Another theme could be community and school safety issues, together with developing cooperative relations with the police. Yet another could be housing and township-squatter settlement relations. Donors can play a large part in putting together projects. The EU told CSVr's Trauma Unit (which deals with de-grieving of victims) to set up a National Network of Survivors (with 12 other organizations) with their clinic or they would withdraw funding.

### 3.3 Diakonia Council of Churches, Durban

Diakonia Council of Churches was first established in 1976 in Durban, and is currently committed to a project called Durban Functional Region. DCC has worked closely with a number of church-related community organizations in South Africa, including the 11 Community Resource Centres in townships near Durban, trying to resolve conflicts. Their Survivor Support Programme provides two levels of training: (1) in 'stress trauma', people are taught to 'tell their stories (of trauma) and move on'; in (2) people learn how to help others as 'wounded healers' and to train trainers to run courses at the community level. Other activities are peace marches, 'employment Sundays' at churches, 'Social Justice Season' and pastoral letters. DCC also works to establish Support Group Meetings – a kind of community policing forum – by way of an ecumenical structure in a number of townships where previously 'individual church members had no place to report crime and vent their frustration'. They use the Council of Churches guidelines for workshop training guidelines on community policing for church members.

DCC's relationship with Diakonia in Sweden includes funding for specific programmes, as well as a general grant of 80,000 Rand. Last year, DCC received over 1,000,000 Rand (or 26% of its budget) for the project on economic empowerment, survivor support and 11 community resource centres (the latter now independently managed by local committees and funded by Diakonia WCC developmental funder). Diakonia-Sweden pays for seven of DCC's staff members. It is, however, clear that DCC cannot sustain the level of work, as international funding (78% of budget) is drying up. DCC is seeking funds from local sources (22%), and church (5%) and corporate sectors. In addition, its staff will shrink. It will thus focus its energy on AIDS, economic empowerment and democracy and peace.

Diakonia Council of Churches has broad linkages to other NGOs working in the field of conflict resolution, through its wide network obtained over the past decades, and is a well-established organization. As for gender, it has a 'transformation facilitation group' of four persons who work on race and gender. As for women ministers, there are fewer than 10 women of 300 men; women are also in the minority on all the committees, but in the majority as recipients of aid.

#### Key Lessons Learned:

- As an institutionalized organization the DCC functions well and has a broad spectrum of activities in Durban. However, as with many other organizations, the ambition level is sometimes over-stretched in relation to the existing capacities. The organization faces lack of resources and decreased prospects for funding, and it could need to develop a more focused plan for future activities.
- Being a church organization, the problem of conservatism seem to delay the process of discussing several important issues in some communities, such as domestic violence, sexual abuse and HIV-AIDS. This was especially illustrated by the dilemma of promoting the use of condoms. It is a future task for the organization to handle the issue of Christian values and faith within the realities of the communities in which they are operating.

### 3.4 Network of Independent Monitors (Field Visit to the Ex-Combatant Project in Chesterville)

NIM grew out of a national network of organizations involved in violence monitoring in the early 1990s, but there was no capacity to do fieldwork in these organizations, so NIM was asked to take on this task. In 1995, the network was consolidated into two offices, one in Durban and the other in the Transkei. Later, this second office was closed for security reasons. There are eight staff and two officers in cramped space in a poorer section of downtown Durban.

The network's two foci are event monitoring and investigation. Events, such as the 1999 elections or funerals where violence is expected, can entail an 'interventionist' approach. Security is arranged beforehand for the participants; follow-up medical treatment is made available; and, if violence does occur, evidence is recorded, for example through witnesses' testimonies about police brutality or photos for the court records.

The other focus is on investigative procedures: taking statements from victims and perpetrators, medical documentation of torture, etc. The need for this kind of work is in itself testimony to the continuing *organized* political and social violence by, for example, police who may be linked to the Inkatha Freedom Party during and after elections.

NIM also oversees an Early Warning Function and Crisis Intervention, which attempts to build trust among institutions among the Independent Complaints Department, the Department of Justice DPP Special Police Unit ‘Scorpion’ (for organized crime) and Police Intelligence, as a way of prioritizing Community Police Forums (CPF). Finally, NIM is overseeing the newly organized ex-combatant project in the township of Chesterville, outside of Durban, which is seeking to establish a cooperative of a bakery and market. Forty ex-combatants, many of whom unskilled, unemployed, ex-prisoners, forced into exile and marginalized from their communities, are trying to construct a Chesterville Community Development organization.

#### Key Lessons Learned:

- With the ex-combatant project, NIM has developed a very strong community-based activity, and has focused on securing local ownership. The methodology is merely to strive to act as facilitators and to provide information and material to the group. This has proved successful for the participants, as they are able to continue the process of healing and decide upon future commitments in their own pace. The challenge, however, is how to work in a divided community in a manner that conveys impartiality while supporting the victims.

### 3.5 Project for Conflict Resolution, Port Elisabeth

People coming from the University of Port Elisabeth established PCRDR in 1995. The present staff is seven persons. PCRDR has at present three main programmes: Community Capacity Building and Transformation Training, Gender Awareness and Life Skills Training Education Programme. Circumstances have been quite stable during the period of support, 1997–2000. PCRDR has followed similar objectives and types of activities since its inception and has concentrated activities in the Cradock, Middleburg and Hofmeyer, areas of Port Elisabeth, as well as in a few other areas.

The focus has been on violent communities. Cradock is the most typical example of a very violent community, whilst the others represent less violent and more typical communities in the South African context. PCRDR tries to work with the actual conflict areas in the communities, and seeks a role in enhancing a dialogue between community members. PCRDR strives to have a holistic and comprehensive view of all factors that negatively impact on peace and personal security.

The PCRDR approach is to interact with people in order to promote a peaceful community. PCRDR therefore does not favour shorter, one-off training interventions, which would result in a wider spread of interventions at the expense of in-depth involvement. PCRDR consciously works for long-term solutions with a lasting presence in the communities, and it strives for integrated activities.

PCRDR discusses the possible effects of its interventions in various reports. As PCRDR is primarily a training organization, this enables it to provide statistics on the number of participants and the training they have followed. As the target groups for PCRDR activities have been relatively focused during its years of operation, it is possible for PCRDR to assess when its interventions have contributed to a relative peace in the communities and when it would be appropriate to pull out and move to other areas. This was discussed with PCRDR representatives, who feel that this is now becoming part of their strategies. Therefore, their programmes are beginning to concentrate on developing community trainers to carry on the activities in areas where PCRDR decides to pull out and on supporting competence development in life-skills areas among local people.

Support has continued for PCRDR through the Community Capacity Building Project within the programme for Social and Economic Justice.

### Key Lessons Learned:

- Due to the fact that PCRD operates on donor funding, the changing priorities of the donors affect the possibilities for PCRD to decide on where it wants to go and in what competence areas it is able to operate. Its more recent policies that describe new priorities are, to a large extent, not yet funded. Sida's more recent priorities for funding peacebuilding projects in Kwa-Zulu-Natal naturally influences PCRD's operations in the same field in the Eastern Cape, as PCRD is intentionally Eastern Cape-oriented.
- There are weaknesses in the result analysis of the PCRD activities. The main activities are in the form of training. The output in terms of activities implemented and the number of participants are well documented. There is no comprehensive documentation available with regard to impact, which in this case is not an impossible task as PCRD has concentrated on four specific geographical areas of the ECPA since 1995 and has used a similar approach in each case.
- The roles and responsibilities of Sida, the recipient communities and PCRD seem to be clear and explicit. There appear to be no problems over stepping into each other's territories, and there is constant communication. The weaker point is the role and responsibilities of the recipient. There is communication and interaction with the communities, but these have not been allocated any specific responsibility for sustainability, evaluation and other similar factors.
- The documentation studied shows that PCRD has lately put efforts into assessing its strategies and scope of work as well as the results actually achieved. It has adopted a new approach to the training of trainers and has reassessed the role of these. This illustrates that healthy self-criticism supports the creation of learning organizations. Diakonia/Sida should encourage such analysis

### 3.6 Centre for Conflict Resolution, University of Cape Town

The Saamspaan Project was initiated by the Centre for Conflict Resolution in Cape Town in 1995 and received funding from Diakonia under a one-year agreement in 1998. The project was created as a response to a need in the rural areas for efficient models in conflict management. Three management teams were established and trained, with the purpose of equipping them with knowledge and skills to deal with conflict resolution in the communities. Target areas for this Diakonia-supported project were the local communities of Mossel Bay, Uniondale and Grabovw.

With the National Peace Accord in 1991, local Peace Committees were established throughout South Africa. In 1994, as elections phased out these Committees and replaced them with local government, there was still a need for hands-on management in each community. Thus, for the next two years, a mandate provided for one black and one white chairperson to diffuse community conflicts and to build capacity.

The CCR Saamspaan Project<sup>1</sup> director admits that the project failed to understand that the need for the new government to be seen to be in control vitiated their work, destabilizing the necessary equanimity for conflict resolution. Moreover, there was an absence of a formal mandate for the committees. Hence, civil servants, who needed an invitation to join the committee, never participated, as the invitation never arrived. Finally, the formalization of ways to deal with both manifest and hidden conflicts was lacking. In other words, when the conflicts and discussion appeared to be about housing, for example, they were 'really about power struggles between blacks and coloureds', stated the CCR director of the project.

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<sup>1</sup> Funded by the Dutch the first *two* years, and by Diakonia for *one* year to phase out the project

Despite failures and mistakes in the Saamspaan project, there is a belief that there has been a strong positive personal and political ‘residue’ of those who served on these committees, especially in terms of racial attitudes. In addition, it is seen as a worthwhile lesson to have the flexibility to learn from one’s mistakes and to experiment with models of conflict management. So much so that the same committee style is being used now elsewhere to facilitate discussions between local MPs and local chiefs – a discussion that the local district secretary would not allow. The NGO serves as a resource to establish a Lesotho network steering committee of conflict management for potential conflicts between chiefs and government. In this case, the local government ministry acknowledges the existence of this network steering committee and involves it in its planning.

The Saamspaan Project was terminated in 1999.

#### Key Lessons Learned:

- Failure to recognize that local government authorities may be in conflict with other forms of local communities, and that the imposition of authority on a divided community will fuel – not diminish – divisions and conflict. In addition, pushing agendas that are yours and not those of the people you supposedly are serving will fail.
- In the Saamspaan project, there was a need for local ownership perhaps at the very beginning of the process, even though the question was asked, ‘Are you proactive in selling this need to the community, or do you just sit and wait till the community needs conflict management?’ CCR has decided that it works on the basis of request for conflict management training and goes from there. Local ownership and capacity building are now key elements in their project strategies

### 3.7 Urban Monitoring and Awareness Committee

UMAC was established in 1985, primarily as a local organization for monitoring state of emergencies in the region. The need for assistance in conflict resolution between the security forces and the communities caused a shift of focus towards more negotiations and mediation between parties as well as training in conflict resolution. By the end of the 1980s, they were involved in supporting victims of the Crossroad War. Monitoring conflicts has however been an important part of UMAC work during the 1990s, together with facilitation, mediation and capacity building in conflict resolution. The organization now embodies 12 people. UMAC operates in the Western Cape region with a wide range of projects with focus on conflict resolution; the organization has been constantly subject to changes, primarily due to the new political environment and changes in conflict structures.

UMAC’s Reconstruction and Development Support project was initiated in 1997 to provide conflict resolution skills to communities involved in the Reconstruction and Development Programmes (RDP). It was a response to the increased conflicts in the township areas and based on the assumption that there is a causal link between these conflicts and a delayed development process. UMAC embarked upon a process of conflict analysis, and the outcome formed the platform for the present UMAC RDP project.

Within the RDP, six forums were elected locally to promote development and support to disadvantaged communities around the Western Cape. UMAC identified structural weaknesses within these forums, and the project sought to address problems related to the lack of capacity, conflict on RDP issues, absence of conflict management resources and lack of community participation in the development planned for the area.

The objective of the project was to meet the identified needs of the RDP forums by acting as a conflict management resource to the six forums. Workshops were undertaken to enhance skills and to empower the members in the management of conflict.

Another objective of the programme was the implementation of a capacity-building programme. On the basis of a training needs analysis, capacity building was identified as needed in the administration, for fundraising and financial management, development processes, prioritizing community needs, community participation and interaction with the local government. UMAC carried out seminars and workshops to improve capacity within the forums and facilitated exchange of experiences between the different forums.

The support to UMAC through Diakonia was phased out in 1999.

#### Key Lessons Learned:

- The institutional, socio-political and economic realities of the areas concerned are understood by UMAC. From work on the community level, UMAC is aware of changes and through communication directly with the recipient able to adjust to expressed needs at the local level. This project was however governed by other forces and considerations outside the communities, the donor and the NGO. UMAC was to a large extent not able to take responsibility for its actions and programme.
- The RDP itself was extremely complicated and complex, and UMAC admits to the fact that the project was not sufficiently analysed by UMAC before it was carried out. In addition, unforeseen political and environmental changes and developments affected the outcome. This had to do with the fact that Western Cape was not ruled by the ANC and the fact that the phasing out of the RDP programme on the national and provincial levels could not have been foreseen by UMAC.
- The RDP project came into effect after a request from local communities who took part in the RDP. Identification of weaknesses and strengths was done in collaboration with the affected communities and as such not in competition with other similar organizations. UMAC has also sought to cooperate with organizations and institutions in the surrounding area. Local participation is regarded as a key component in improving the situation and involving the affected population.
- It is difficult to assess the impact of this RDP-focused project on the overall RDP. The fact that the RDP forums established under the programme were not sustainable can partly be seen as a result of conflicting interests, lack of capacity and competing governmental structures in the Western Cape. UMAC was not able to recognize the full complexity of the programme when it submitted its proposal for the project. It has also been difficult to operate within the structures that developed at governmental level along the implementation of the programme.
- An issue is raised about when an NGO becomes completely dependent on a government for its operations. A donor funds the operations. The NGO is squeezed in between.

## 4. Analyses and Assessment

### 4.1 Appropriateness

The issue of appropriateness is analysed in the context of: (a) the projects' relation to the goals and strategies of the donor, Sida, and the grant recipient, Diakonia, and (b) the environment and circumstances the projects are operating in.

#### Focus and location

An evaluation of Sida support to various organizations through Diakonia carried out in 1999 reflects the different programmes and strategies undertaken by the organization since the mid-1980s. One of the critical components addressed by the evaluators was the dispersed portfolio of partners and the lack of an overall focus. The activities are very broad, making it difficult for Diakonia to specialize in any particular area. Different projects were located in different parts of the country, requiring more effective monitoring. Diakonia also lacked clear strategies, methods and priorities. In fact, this contributed to Diakonia's serving more as a donor than as implementers of its own projects.

Although focus and priority areas are important factors by which to enhance the impact of Diakonia projects on conflict resolution and peacebuilding, at the same time it is critical to make the strategy more responsive to local and regional patterns of conflict in the country. A too narrow focus on KwaZulu Natal ignores the fact that there is a constant movement of people between this region and Johannesburg/Gauteng region, transferring potential conflicts – especially among young, unemployed black men – from one area to another. For example, the Victory Sonqoba Theatre Company, founded by ex-combatants to cultivate a more reconciliatory climate among themselves, prisoners and the township communities, itself travels and stages its plays in Johannesburg hostels. In the eyes of its members, this is a critical focal point for prevention of conflict, as it is precisely these hostels that house many male workers seeking work from KwaZulu Natal. The theatre group understands well how the legacy of dramatic economic disparities from the apartheid period still structures violence in both Johannesburg and KwaZulu Natal, and it seeks to overcome that legacy by way of theatre-as-conflict-resolution.

Hence, a more thematic approach on Diakonia's part would detect such currents and allow the support to be more trans-regional and more flexible (i.e., less stringently tied to geographic specificity). With such an approach, the focus on conflict transformation could be narrowed to support particular themes and approaches (i.e., ex-combatants and ex-prisoners), instead of trying to cover a broad spectrum of projects. This would facilitate a more active network between the partner organizations.

### 4.2 Coherence

Under coherence, we look at both internal and external coherence. Internal coherence analyses the projects in relation to Sida's goals and agenda in South Africa, by examining the Sida guidelines and country strategy. External coherence analyses under what context and political circumstances support has been granted, and the relations to other ongoing projects in the region. Is the Swedish support coherent with international demands?

The scope and content of the basket of projects managed by Diakonia has its own history and is hardly composed in terms of coherence. It has neither a composition that would be regarded as

exemplary, representing a diverse spectrum of coherent projects, nor is it consciously selected in terms of geographic spread or characterized by conscious decisions on linkages and overlaps and other factors. Each project functions and should be evaluated on its own merits.

In general terms, however, the support to all projects appears consistent with Sida's goals and strategies at the time of funding. However, there was a lack of reflection about the creation of the Democracy Programme and what this would imply for cooperation between Diakonia and the partner organizations.

There are also general problems associated with the coherence of projects in South Africa, as there is such a multiplicity of actors operating in the field. It is therefore more or less unavoidable that there are other comparable activities in the same regional and local contexts. This makes it difficult for the donor and the recipient to analyse the situation adequately and to understand how well their work is coordinated with the international donor community. Secondly, it is difficult to evaluate whether there is an overall strategy guiding Diakonia and, by extension, Sida. The latter relies on its country strategy, but it is not clear that this is sufficient for the desk officers to handle the issue of coherence.

### **4.3 Connectedness**

The issue of connectedness relates to the sustainability of the projects. It also concerns whether a short-term activity is carried out with long-term considerations in mind.

In the case of South Africa, there appears to be an integrated link between the supported project and development. If compared to many other areas of conflict and post-conflict, the development programmes in South Africa have aimed at focusing on conflict management under the headings of democracy and human rights – and as such are seen from a more long-term perspective. It is, however, important to address the link between long-term development and conflict resolution in terms of flexibility and the projects' ability to work on a long-term basis under changing circumstances.

Diakonia has defined capacity building as a priority area and an independent goal with its partner organizations. Capacity building is seen as activity within the organizations. Within this definition, most organizations try to enhance their own capacity but there is often a lack of strategic thinking about achieving the same effect with partners and target groups. In this respect, it becomes important to define what capacity building means for Diakonia. Is this the most effective way of achieving the desired standard? How can one increase 'local capacity building' to create sustainable projects, or should one leave competence building to chance and to the environment in which the project teams are operating? How does Diakonia identify the needs of the partner organizations?

On a general level, all the organizations evaluated try to involve the community. But poverty in the communities impacts negatively on the communities' potential to drive the change process themselves. Thus, the increase in local ownership might best be measured in terms of the increase of community involvement.

### **4.4 Gender equality**

All organizations are conscious of the demand for gender equality from the donors and also as an expressed strategy in South Africa. The leadership of the recipient organizations, however, is still predominately male, with an increasing number of women at the project management and implementation levels. With regard to the target groups, the organizations try to show in what ways gender balance is achieved in terms of involvement or being receivers of support.

We did not discover any conscious attempt to exclude women – neither within the organizations nor in the target groups. The Diakonia Council of Churches in Durban did admit that women constitute a minority on all their committees and that the ratio of female ministers is very low (10 out of a total 300).

## **4.5 Flexibility**

Many of the organizations supported by Sida work on the grassroots level. In terms of peace building and conflict resolution, the programmes connect to what is actually happening locally and are in this aspect flexible.

The organizations are also satisfied with the dialogue with Sida and Diakonia. However, many feel that it is mainly Sida that is changing direction and focus of funding, leaving organizations with no funding or potential for alternative funding for part of their programmes. At the same time, the organizations acknowledge that they have been informed of new and changing directions and understand the reasoning behind Sida's priorities in general terms. However, they naturally feel that activities that are struck out are still of great.

The speed of communication, response and the quality of dialogue between Sida, Diakonia and the recipient organizations have generally been regarded as positive by those we interviewed.

## **4.6 Location of responsibility**

There is clarity regarding the roles and responsibilities of Sida, Diakonia and the leadership of the recipient organizations and who is supposed to do what. We did not find any noteworthy signs of lack of leadership in the organizations interviewed. The risk is rather on the level of organizational sustainability should the present leadership leave or fade away.

## **4.7 Pressure for success/possibility of failure**

For some Diakonia/Sida funded organizations, the activities funded by Sida and the effects of such funding are not easily traceable.

The project representatives we met all seem to be well aware of how to structure a project to the satisfaction of the donor. Many have received training about the project management cycle. The study of project documents nonetheless reveals weaknesses with regard to the realism of the proposals and what they aim to achieve. There is a constant need to improve projects but making funding conditional on meeting demands for improvement is not always the best way to achieve the desired changes.

Due to the limited time and wide range of projects involved, we were unable to assess how much pressures for success and fears of failure drive the various organizations. Until now, it has been possible for organizations to find funding relatively easily. This situation is changing. It is hard to predict what effect this will have on the organizations we met with.

## **4.8 Institutional competence/staff base**

There is a general tendency among many of the organizations funded through Diakonia to try to cover too much too soon and lack focus. This weakness undermines organisational capacity building. It also jeopardizes the project outcomes. One explanation for this lack of focus is that the local organizations run after donor money, adapting themselves and creating projects to suit such donors'

priorities. There seems to be a lack of institutional learning from failed projects on the donors' part (although there seems to be quite a lot of reflection on the part of the project leaders themselves), because the sharing of information is poor and uncoordinated. Many organizations funded through Diakonia work in the same field and operate under similar conditions, but lack an effective network through which to learn from each other's failures and successes. From what we saw, the project participants would welcome a more active role by Diakonia in this respect.

Most of the projects and partner organizations operate in the local community, and focus on local capacity building as an integral part of the overall projects. There is, however, no consistent definition of capacity building or of how to succeed in creating local ownership of the project. The communities often grow dependent on the implementing organization, although it does not have the necessary resources or capability to sustain the project (cf the cases of UMAC, Saamspaan and PCRD). It thus appears important to include the right actors in the project and to have an in-depth structural analysis of the situation before implementation. This could help achieve some sustainability of effort even if the sponsoring organization is unable to continue with the project.

There has recently been turnover among the permanent staff at Diakonia although there is an overlap to secure the continuity of their programme. The Diakonia staff is highly committed to its work and has generally gained a broader consciousness after the evaluation of the organization. Diakonia underwent a major change in 1997 by administering the Democracy Programme; this indicates that lessons have been learned with regard to administration, its own capacities and the level of integration with its partner organization. The staff has added a South African employee with extensive experience within NGOs in the region.

We believe, however, that Diakonia can play an even stronger role in the relationship with its organizations by creating a network that communicates more frequently to build co-operation and share experiences. With this approach, Diakonia can come to play a more independent role. It will also raise the level of competence in the organization.

High levels of commitment among the staff characterize all the projects and programmes supported by Diakonia although the experiences and capacities vary immensely from the different organizations. Many projects still depend on charismatic and engaged founders and are in naturally quite vulnerable. A general impression however is that the staff members have a very good knowledge of the present situation in South Africa, and is well aware of the environment they are operating in.

## **5. Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **5.1 Conclusion**

In 1999, an evaluation of four umbrella organizations in South Africa was conducted. On the basis of that report, Sida decided to streamline its strategy in conceptual and geographic terms, and to rationalize it in financial terms. This shift had several implications for Diakonia, among them that Diakonia would be encouraged to become more 'professionalized', as one Sida person described it, and more focused in terms of conflict management issues. Moreover, Diakonia would target the province of KwaZulu Natal, which has the highest levels of violence in South Africa, for conflict management activities. In addition, the issues of HIV-AIDS and gender were to be given much higher priority than found in earlier Diakonia-directed projects. This shift in focus and conceptuali-

zation indicates more oversight by Sida in drawing Diakonia into its more explicit strategy of conflict resolution and peace building, and seemingly a more structured and active role on the part of Sida than previously.

The support to NGOs is impressive, and many of the local partners agree that support from Diakonia is essential for their work. Some issues do arise, however, concerning the Sida strategy and funding. In order for Sida to play a more active role in conflict resolution in South Africa, a more structured dialogue with Diakonia is recommended. This will help steer the process in the desired direction, and aid capacity building in the two organizations. More frequent networking with partner organizations is also recommended.

NGOs are involved in every aspect of development – socio-economic development, planning structures, capacity building. If efforts to prevent, resolve, and transform conflicts are to be effective in the long term they must proceed from the active participation of local civil groups. It is thus necessary to strengthen local capacities and local ownership of peace processes.

In addition, Sida should seek to define and analyse the present strategies of conflict management and peace building in conjunction with the action programme for democracy and human rights in a South African context and inform the partner organizations of its decisions about these issues. This would allow Sida to play a more active role in the processes it supports. The role of the donors can extend beyond the simple provision of financial support for projects. Donors can provide an extra impulse in the peace building process by stimulating conferences, agenda setting and developing directories. In the same vein, Sida should work as a link between its partner organizations and other international donors by promoting international exchange between the actors operating in the region.

There is a need to strengthen coalition building between civil organizations as the effectiveness of activities is often limited by lack of co-ordination between groups operating in the similar fields. Failure to achieve synergy often results in a waste of resources and unnecessary duplication and competition. The creation of networks within civil society can promote coalitions and constituency building.

Diakonia has had to narrow its focus to specific geographic areas of conflict resolution, for both restructuring as well as financial reasons, in order to play a more active role in the process and gain the necessary competence to analyse the situation. There is a problem with this. The focus continues to be on the most violent province, KwaZulu Natal. It is, however, the *dynamic* of violence as a cross-regional flow of men, arms and jobs between Johannesburg hostels and KwaZulu Natal that needs to be seriously examined and included in future funding projects in order to provide a better understanding of the causes and the prevention of violent conflict.

As elaborated on in this report, the projects supported by Sida were originally selected using other criteria than those more commonly used for conflict management and peace building. The transition to a new South Africa has probably been more successful than was predicted by many donors and by South Africans themselves. It was at the time of the emergence of the new South Africa reasonable to support all qualified efforts geared towards alleviating tension and to build bridges between hostile groups. The projects discussed above have played their roles in this scenario and have together with many other actors played their part in contributing to the relative success of the South African transition process. What this role has been in practise and their contribution over and above the more restricted outputs and effects on the primarily local situation is however very difficult to assess.

The documentation shows that they lately have put efforts into assessing their strategies and scope of work as well as the results they have actually achieved. They have adopted new approach to training of trainers and reassessed their roles. This illustrates that healthy self-criticism supports the creation of learning organizations. Diakonia/Sida should encourage such analysis

## 5.2 Recommendations for Sida

- So Sida can play a more active role in conflict resolution in South Africa, we recommend a more structured dialogue with Diakonia in order to help steer the process in the desired direction, and for capacity building in the two organizations.
- A strategic priority for Sida and Diakonia should be the promotion of a coalition building between civil society organizations. This can be done by making funds available both for joint projects and for specifically coalition-building activities such as NGO seminars and conferences.
- Sida should work as a link between its partner organizations and other international donors by promoting international exchange between the actors operating in the region.
- Sida should support projects that focus on specific *arenas* (and not just geographic areas) of conflict and its resolution in order to play a more active role in the process and gain the necessary competence to analyse the situation. The focus should continue on KwaZulu Natal as previously recommended, but a more *dynamic* approach to the violence would detect cross-regional needs.
- As KwaZulu Natal is now prioritised, the possibility exists for the donor community involved in the region to avoid being compartmentalized. This is an opportune has come for the donor community to ensure that as many sectors of the society as possible are included in any peace-building process. It is also important for an agency to analyse its relationship to the conflict and the conflicting parties before attempting to build peace.
- In order to ensure the coherence of projects supported by Sida through its partner organization, it is advisable to establish a level of communication that allows for discussions and input by both organizations between the project proposal and the implementation.
- Sida should seek to define and analyse the present strategies of conflict management and peace building in conjunction with the action programme for democracy/human rights in a South African context and inform the partner organizations. This would allow Sida to play a more active role in the process. The role of the donors can extend beyond the simple provision of financial support for projects. Donors can provide an extra impulse in the peace building process by stimulating conferences, agenda setting and developing directories.

## 5.3 Recommendations for Diakonia

- Although there is a high level of commitment in the various organizations, there is a general lack of conscious capacity building programmes for staff members. We recommend Diakonia to play a more active role in capacity building by creating a more active network between the partner organizations and to give them feedback on a more frequent basis. Learning from each other's experiences inspires innovative approaches. This will also raise the capacity within Diakonia and eventually in Sida.

- Most dedicated organizations want to cover too much too soon, resulting in inefficient use of both financial and human resources. When reviewing and deciding on funding to a particular project or organization, the human resources and capacity defined to carry out the assignment must be in line with reasonable goals.
- After the political transition, many organizations have had problems defining their role in the civil society. Too many institutionalized NGOs have continued to operate in South Africa without purpose. It is reasonable to question the genuine interest and value of the existence of some NGOs.



## **Annex 5**

### **Case Study on East Timor: Sida's Support for Dialogue Activities of the Department of Peace & Conflict Research, Uppsala University**

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**Barbro Rönarmo, SIPU International, Stockholm**

# 1. Introduction

The Department of Peace & Conflict Research, Uppsala University (PCR), has received funds from Sida for activities from 1997 into 2000 to help foster dialogue between contending groups in the conflict over East Timor and the struggle for independence from Indonesia.

This assessment of the project is almost purely a desk-study, made under extremely tight time constraints. As well as documents from Sida, PCR and some of the dialogue workshops, there have been conversations with those responsible at PCR, Sida and the Swedish MFA.

## 2. Background

The nature of the activity has evolved in response to the changing context of conflict. Since 1975, the conflict has gone through several significantly different phases. First there was the invasion, the resistance and the immediate aftermath of warfare and massacre by Indonesian forces. Next, though there was barely any international recognition of Indonesia's claim to East Timor, there was an extended period of international silence until the 1990s. The third phase began when this silence was broken by international media attention in the aftermath of the Santa Cruz massacre in 1991, culminating in the 1996 Nobel Peace Prize awarded to Bishop Belo and Josè Ramos Horta, which gave the issue an even higher profile.

It was in this period that PCR's engagement with the issues in the conflict began. In this period, there was a deepening of discussions within the UN and between it and Portugal and Indonesia on the status of East Timor. At this time one important focus was the possibility local self-government, an arrangement that would give greater autonomy to east Timor without placing it outside the Indonesian state. This issue was central in the PCR dialogue activities.

The fourth phase of the East Timor independence struggle started with the crisis in Indonesia and the appointment of President Habibie to replace President Suharto in 1998. In January 1999, Habibie announced that East Timor should have a referendum on independence. The referendum took place on 30 August 1999 amid an atmosphere of intimidation and threats of reprisal by anti-independence militias trained by the Indonesian military. The fifth and briefest phase was the immediate response to the clear majority vote in favour of independence, consisting of systematic attacks on the East Timorese by the militias, resulting in 200,000 refugees and the displacement for varying periods of an estimated 97 per cent of the population. The entry of a UN force on 15 September ended the fifth phase and began the sixth, the transition to independence.

### 3. Activities

The East Timor Study Group (ETSG) is an independent group who describe their objective as

*‘to provide a space for discussion and analysis of the problem faced by East Timorese society, including promoting democratic principles and human rights values in general and resolving of the conflict in east Timor in particular.’<sup>1</sup>*

In 1997 the ETSG contacted Uppsala University and Kjell-Åke Nordquist at PCR because of his ongoing research project on autonomy, at a time when this was a focus of discussions about East Timor’s future. The aim was to hold seminars at which the participants would elucidate different forms of self-government. The working group consisted of persons from a wide range of professions and communities including scholarly, parliamentary, clerical, student activists, the media, and the military.

All members of the group were nationals of East Timor/Indonesia. During 1997 and 1998, PCR facilitated the seminars in collaboration with Australian National University in Canberra and the American University in Washington. The UN was represented at all seminars, without playing an active role in the process. The last seminar in this series was held in Jakarta 1999 and was arranged solely by Uppsala University.

After the meeting in Jakarta, President Habibie’s statement that East Timor should have the opportunity to choose between independence and autonomy within Indonesia re-wrote the political map. Since autonomy was to be one of two alternatives in the forthcoming referendum, the seminars in their previous form were no longer an option. Opinion became sharply polarised and the quasi-academic, study group approach ceased to be feasible.

From then until the referendum in August, Kjell-Åke Nordquist acted as an international expert in the East Timor Peace and Reconciliation Initiative project (ETPRIDE), which is closely associated with the Catholic Church and in particular the diocese of Dili. He also worked for the DARE II conference for political leaders on the theme of Dialogue and Reconciliation, held at the end of June. The conference tried and failed to find a co-operative way to avoid violence around the referendum at the end of August.

With the entry of the UN force in September and the start of the transition to independence, the form of PCR’s engagement again changed dramatically. The dialogue process was re-started with a meeting in Singapore in November 1999 that brought participants in the earlier seminars together again. A proposal was made to the UN, and accepted, to include pro-autonomy East Timorese in the UN’s work in East Timor, along with those who favoured independence. A second meeting was held in Tokyo three weeks later, and there were further meetings in January 2000 (Singapore) and August 2000 (Washington, DC). These meetings have brought together representatives of all sides in the conflict, including the Indonesian military and the armed forces of the pro-independence movement.<sup>2</sup> As it was revived, the project simultaneously made a transition from being a clear Track II intervention, to being a contribution to Track I processes, negotiating the terms of the

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<sup>1</sup> *East Timor Facing the Future: Reconciliation, Institution Building, and Economic Reconstruction*. Edited by Joao M. Saldanha and Michael E. Salla. Final Report of the Washington DC Workshop, held at Swissotel, The Watergate, Washington, DC, 3–6 August 2000. Unpublished.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*

larger transition in East Timor itself. The source of this transformation lay in the views and wishes of the participants themselves.

There have thus been three sequential phases of PCR work on East Timor:

- 1997 to January 1999: workshops, focusing on autonomy; Track II;
- February to August 1999: Engagement in ETPRIDE and DARE II, attempting to prevent the escalation of violence;
- November 1999 to August 2000: a new round of meetings on central issues in the transition to independence; contributing to Track I.

The report from the latest of these workshops in Washington (see note 1) depicts them all from 1997 as being part of one series. However, the interruption of activities in 1999 and the subsequent shift in thematic focus indicate that a phased view is more realistic.

Sida has funded PCR participation in all these activities, including ETPRIDE and DARE II via a grant to Caritas. Funding has been more or less *ad hoc*, i.e., the project has proceeded seminar-by-seminar, and so has the funding, until 2000. In 1998–1999, Sida made grants totalling SEK 1.7 million to support the dialogue workshops. Now Sida has made a grant of SEK 2 million for the project for 2000 and 2001.

Sida has by no means been the only funder. The Washington report expresses particular thanks for financial support for the workshops as a whole not only to Sida, but also to the United States Institute for Peace, the Ford Foundation and the Australian Agency for International Development. There was a wide range of other funders for ETPRIDE and DARE II.

Just as the funding base for the activities has been broad, so has the organisational base. As well as PCR, the American University, Washington, the Australian National University and the East Timor Study Group are credited for the work. PCR was the sole convenor/facilitator of some workshops, however, such as Jakarta (January 1999) and Singapore (November 1999).

Thus, while this study focuses on Sida's support to PCR's activities, it is important to acknowledge the fuller financial and organisational context. PCR and Sida co-operated not only with each but also other partners responsible variously for organisation, co-ordination and funding of the activities. No one organisation could take over any single aspect of the activities, and none would try. This helps protect the integrity of the activities themselves by effectively eliminating the prospect of intrusive micro-management by any sponsoring organisation. When projects are set up like this, funders must simply choose between supporting and not supporting the activities in question, rather than being able to fit them to pre-set organisational imperatives and strategic preferences.

## 4. Dialogue projects

The value of dialogue projects lies in their capacity to address how people think and interact. Dialogue is different from both argument (a verbal fight) and debate (a verbal fight with polite rules) in that it does not emphasise winning points, but rather the exchange of perceptions and ideas. To create an exchange, it is necessary to listen, and to take care in the mode of expressing a point of view. For these reasons, dialogue in various informal settings – whether with elite and leadership groups or with grass roots NGO activists – can lead to new ideas, insights and the possibility of creative solutions to intractable problems. There is growing experience in dialogue work and a growing theoretical literature.

Dialogue work has a special relevance in the Swedish case. Dialogue often needs a safe, neutral and very often discreet place, which is most likely to be found in projects originating in or associated with a country that is traditionally not centrally located in the major world systems of political power. Sweden is not the only such country, but is prominent among them, with a strong tradition of political engagement in world affairs.

Dialogue projects also raise some interesting challenges for a development-oriented agency such as Sida. It is worth asking, what is the key ‘deliverable’ in a dialogue project? One may get to the same point by a different route by asking, does a dialogue project fit a log-frame? If changing how people think is one of the objectives of promoting dialogue, how can that be measured? How can the wider social and political impact be measured? There are some cases in which a group in a dialogue activity decides to sign a joint statement outlining a new approach to a difficult problem. Such a statement could be set against previously recorded statements of attitude at the outset, and the change would be observable. Would it, however, be measurable? And what of those cases in which some members of a group cannot sign a statement because of the physical dangers if they do so?

None of this makes dialogue projects less worthwhile, nor does it mean that there is no possibility of reporting on dialogue projects, or of assessing their worth. Rather, the implication is that dialogue projects require a different kind of reporting than many other kinds of projects, including some within the field of peacebuilding.

## 5. Analysis

### 5.1 Appropriateness

The key question identified under this heading in the inception report is whether and how Sida and PCR explored how appropriate was the proposed activity to the circumstances. In particular, it is up for consideration whether changing circumstance led to changes in goals and modes of activity, how good were the local sources of information, and whether appropriateness was a specific or implied criterion in developing and accepting the project.

PCR’s proposals and Sida’s assessments of the project do reflect consideration of the issue of how appropriate the project is. However, the basis of Sida’s evaluation is not an already established knowledge of conditions in East Timor and, more generally, in Indonesia; rather, it reflects a pre-

established relationship with PCR, an institution in which Sida had grounds to be confident. On PCR's side there is a very evident, and evidently very rich, learning process. Detailed local knowledge and networks grew because of involvement in the project and through the role in it of PCR and, in particular, of Kjell-Ake Nordquist.

It is also clear that this experience and knowledge gained thereby created the basis on which PCR was able to interrupt the project when necessary in early 1999, and resume it again in different form later in the year. The adaptability to changing circumstances that PCR and Sida showed at that time is the very essence of appropriateness.

We could conclude from this that, throughout the project, PCR had enough knowledge to satisfy the criterion of appropriateness. This criterion can be regarded as being less demanding in 1997 when PCR's engagement in the project began. It was certainly reasonable of PCR to fill in any gaps in its own knowledge by relying on the fact that it was invited to participate by ETSG. By being involved in the project, PCR gained enough knowledge to be able to maintain the project's appropriateness when conditions became a great deal more demanding and difficult in 1999. Largely, Sida relied on PCR and trusted in its established relationship with PCR, as well as following the lead of the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA).

All this raises a question, to which we shall return, of how knowledgeable the funder has to be in order to support a project. If Sida were to insist that its own level of knowledge had to be high enough to judge the appropriateness of a project before it could decide whether or not to fund the project, the outcome would obviously be somewhat restrictive. Sida could then only fund projects in areas about which it had expert knowledge, and to conduct activities in which it had expert knowledge. This is likely to mean missing valuable opportunities to contribute to the prospects of peacebuilding in difficult conflict areas. Given the lead from the MFA and the well grounded confidence Sida had in PCR, Sida acted reasonably in deciding to give financial support for a project in which, at the outset, it lacked expert knowledge and clear strategic guidelines.

## 5.2 Coherence

The inception report identified two issues within the concept of coherence: external coherence (overlap, linkage, duplication, contradiction with other activities in the same regional context) and internal coherence (between overall policies, strategy, project goals, and detailed activities).

As to external coherence, PCR and Sida appear to have relied on their awareness that the individuals in the ETSG, who initiated PCR's engagement by seeking its assistance, were knowledgeable and well-placed individuals who could presumably be trusted not to go in for activities that simply duplicated others, or contradicted other valuable efforts. The dialogue project supported other international activities by opening a channel for discussions, which was impossible for the major stakeholders operating in that arena to conduct themselves. It seems, however, that either there was a lack of mechanisms for exchange of information between different agencies operating in the field, so that Sida could get access to strategic information, or that Sida was unaware of the mechanisms that did exist. We see some signs that this has been a source of frustration for Sida because this is not how the agency normally wishes to operate. We do not see signs, however, that Sida's lack of information in this regard was a real problem for the project.

As to internal coherence, in some ways, as far as Sida was concerned, there was none. Sida was not involved in any projects in East Timor at the time when it first gave a grant to PCR for this project. There was no country strategy and no concept papers to guide the desk officers, apart from the

general paper on conflict management and peacebuilding. Thus Sida had to rely on input from PCR, first in initiating the project, and then in regular reporting both in writing and orally.

In larger terms, the project did not lack internal coherence for Sida. The project fitted well with the strategy of conflict management and peacebuilding, focusing on creating an environment for peaceful dialogue between conflicting parties. It also fitted well with the MFA's policy on 'preventive diplomacy.' Moreover, in PCR Sida was relating to an implementing agency that could be expected to be well equipped to handle a dialogue project. Through PCR, Sida was also connected to ETSG whose objective is, as noted above, 'to provide a space for discussion and analysis.' And PCR, as an academic institution, would inevitably be well disposed and well equipped for encouraging analysis as well as discussion and dialogue. Seen in these terms, then, there is no problem of internal coherence.

Nonetheless, it has not been difficult to identify a perception within Sida that the project, for all its value and good work, raises a problem of internal coherence. The problem lies not in the project but in Sida's relationship to it. The project is an unusual one for Sida, with a different style of activity from normal, different modes of reporting from normal. In addition, also unusually, the project was supported despite falling outside Sida's geographic areas of competence and despite the fact that it was not covered by stated strategy and guidelines. An aspect of this problem is that the Swedish MFA was very supportive of the project, which may have functioned as an external pressure upon Sida.

These difficulties – or, rather, the perception that these are difficulties – may have been exacerbated by the pattern of *ad hoc* funding, which resulted in a project that was perceived as some kind of problem being brought repeatedly to the agency's attention for further decisions on extending support.

The *State of the Art Report on Conflict Management and Peace Building* notes (p.34) that several project evaluations have concluded that project coherence was low. Evaluations often suggest the need to establish a coherent policy and strategy, linking development aid, humanitarian aid, and other means of peace building. Some evaluations concluded that this is most likely to happen under the direction of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Even if under the direction of the MFA, the issue of project management still arises. Different approaches are possible here: in Norway, for example, dialogue projects are conducted with funding from the MFA, not NORAD, Sida's counterpart.

The issue for Sida to consider here is not how to force this project or any others like it into a frame that fits Sida's current, established preferences and mode of operation. Rather, the issue is how to make space for projects that fall outside its normal frameworks. If that space is to be created within Sida, its operating procedures will have to adjust.

### 5.3 Connectedness

The inception report relates the issue of connectedness to the sustainability of the project and the question of whether a short-term activity complies with long-term development considerations. It raises the question both of the project's impact and the terms in which local partnership are considered.

The very character of a dialogue project makes it difficult to measure sustainability in terms of a long-term effect and development. The East Timor project has, however, shown connectedness and durability because it was able to adjust to the political environment in the region. The project proposals presented a strategic plan for the project, though the transition Track II intervention to a contribution to Track I occurred in a way that was, not surprisingly, not foreseen at the outset.

The participants were consistent and met in several different circumstances and locations. A level of trust evolved between the participants, allowing the discussions to become more substantial. Critical here was the project's success in the key component of confidence building among the participants. The first seminar in 1997 allowed for the participants to meet in a neutral environment under the facilitation of PCR. Through the seminar they developed a better understanding of their interlocutors' needs, interests, and motivations as the situation evolved. The first phase of the project was exclusive in the sense that it included a relatively small and specific group of people. Nevertheless, several of them came to play an important role in the new governmental structures at a later stage in the process. Indeed, a further important factor in the overall impact of the project was the fact that several of the participants were potential resource persons in the development of a new government structure in East Timor.

Building confidence requires sustained communications between the stakeholders over a period of time. This was backed by Sida's flexibility and willingness to respond to requests for support when a meeting or seminar was needed so the process could move forward. A strong indicator of the confidence and respect PCR gained from the participants is the transformation of the project into a contribution to Track I, which would almost certainly not have happened without a quite high degree of trust. This is also attested to by comments from the Swedish MFA.

One way that PCR seems to have won this trust is because it did not try to take control of the project. It is a weakness of some projects with the same aspirations as this, that the external facilitators are too eager to steer the process. PCR did not try to force seminars or put pressure on the participants, but rather facilitated meetings at the request of the parties. This was part of PCR's ability to function in a non-threatening way. PCR did not represent a threat to the national authorities, and was not politicised as were other actors in the region. The seminars would probably not have happened under UN facilitation, let alone under the mandate of another government. This underlines the importance of Sida's non-interventionist approach. It meant PCR was under no pressure to perform differently and helped ensure there was no hindrance to local ownership.

## 5.4 Gender equality

This is not only one of Sida's four action programmes for mainstreaming, but may also be regarded as particularly relevant in the conflict context. Images of self-identity, modes of communicating, models of organisation, and traditions of participation may all be decisively affected by gender inequality, and may all be part of the problem with which peacebuilding and dialogue work must deal.

It has generally been difficult to mainstream gender issues in conflict resolution. The starting point has been an unpromising, male dominated environment. This has especially been the case outside the NGO community. The UN has long genuflected to gender issues, and is often associated with a rhetoric in which women as mothers and homemakers have a special affinity for peace. The Platform for Action in the 1995 Beijing Women's Conference (1995) agreed to ensure women equal opportunities to participate in peace activities, but little progress has been made on the demanding agenda of change that results from such a commitment.<sup>3</sup> In the PCR's East Timor project, our

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<sup>3</sup> See *Expert Group Meeting on Political Decision-Making and Conflict resolution: The Impact of Gender Difference*. Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, 7-11 October 1996. Report EGM/PRDC/1996/REP.1, 7 November 1996. New York, United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women. The issues discussed in policy terms in the Expert Group Meeting report are explored in theoretical terms in the forthcoming volume, Inger Skjelsbæk & Dan Smith, eds, *gender, Peace and Conflict*. London: Sage Publications, 2001 forthcoming. See also Louise Olsson, *Gendering UN Peacekeeping, Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peacekeeping Operations*, Uppsala University, Department of Peace and Conflict Research Report No. 53, 1999.

understanding is that the question of involving women in the dialogue was raised more than once, but without success. The participants themselves were the stumbling block. In an environment in which it is largely men who have power and influence, it would also have been genuinely difficult to find women of appropriate standing to participate. PCR concluded that stronger pressure from the facilitator could have jeopardised dialogue.

Given the areas of the world in which conflicts are concentrated and where, accordingly, dialogue projects are most needed and most likely to be conducted, this dilemma is one that often arises. PCR's solution – try once, try a few times, but give up before doing irreparable damage – is not unique to PCR. In a choice between local ownership and the principle of gender equality, the normal choice is local ownership. It may be asked of the PCR project, however, as of many others, whether enough thought, and enough creative energy, has been devoted to seeking ways in which the terms of this choice could be changed.

## 5.5 Flexibility

The inception report emphasised the importance of flexibility. The conditions for this include the willingness to alter major sub-goals, to add and delete activities as necessary, the speed of communication and response between the partners, the existence of a continuing dialogue between them.

In many ways, this project was a model of flexibility. Though there is some dissatisfaction about the precise mode of reporting, there is little doubt that there was constant communication between Sida and PCR, who was also in very good contact with the ETSG and other participants. The speed with which the process was resumed after a nine-month interruption is also impressive. On 15 September, Australian-led UN forces entered East Timor, completing the second radical revision of the political context in which the project was conducted. Approximately ten weeks later, the first reconvened project seminar occurred, with another three weeks later and another one month after that. There is a great deal to commend in this. In addition, as we have already commented, PCR had the capacity to interrupt the project and then resume it in altered form, and Sida had the willingness to support that necessary response to changing political circumstances.

We would like in particular to pick out the Singapore meeting in November 1999 as a key moment in the project's flexibility. This was the first time the participants of the previous phase of seminars came back together with PCR. It was in a radically changed context in East Timor following the brutality of the militia period and the subsequent arrival of UN forces. It is worth noting and commending not only the speed with which the Singapore meeting was prepared but also the sensitivity reflected in the agenda. Guidance was given to show the terrain the discussion should cover, yet at the same time the agenda was explicitly open-ended, with many of the issues expressed in the form of questions. From the agenda it is clear that the participants did not have to fear that this was a meeting to which the facilitator arrived with a fixed political agenda and set of objectives.

It is again necessary, however, to comment on the problems that lie behind this exemplary flexibility. The problems lie not in the project itself but in Sida's relationship to it, and in the perceived difficulties that it created for Sida. Rather than praising Sida for institutional flexibility, though that is one credible way of looking at the issue, we could equally well remark that Sida's procedural inflexibility did not get in the way, thanks only to Sida's well grounded confidence in PCR.

## 5.6 Location of responsibility

The inception report identifies a clear division of labour as an important condition for a successful project. In this respect, the project clearly satisfies the criterion. There are three binary relationships within the project. The first is between PCR and Sida, in which the division of labour was clear and Sida never intruded into the project in an unacceptable way. The second binary is between PCR and the participants, where PCR worked out its role as facilitator and stuck to it. In the relationship between Sida and the Swedish MFA, the division of labour was less clear because the MFA did not have a formal role in the decision-making. However, the MFA's participation in discussions about the project probably functioned as a pressure on Sida to support PCR's work. This reflected the MFA's political priorities.

## 5.7 Pressure for success/possibility of failure

Drawing on the Norwegian synthesis evaluation report,<sup>4</sup> the inception report noted that a refusal to accept failure could mean an unwillingness to act, or misleading reports by the implementing agency. The inception report therefore stressed the importance of realistic (appropriate) levels of ambition and raised the question of institutional attitudes to success and failure.

There is no evidence in any of the written material we have looked at, nor in any of the comments from people involved in the project, that there was any inappropriate pressure to succeed, or any sense of unrealistically huge ambitions.

One issue raised from PCR has been that, as an academic institution, its projects should have different criteria of success or failure compared to, for example, humanitarian organisations. We are not inclined to take this seriously. The point is not the organisation but the project. If a humanitarian organisation conducts a dialogue project (as Norwegian Church Aid did in Mali<sup>5</sup>, for example), it should not face criteria that are inappropriate to dialogue work, any more than PCR. If PCR felt some pressure to conform to inappropriate reporting systems and criteria, the inappropriateness it identified was in relationship to the nature of the project, not the nature of PCR.

More importantly, Sida seems to have had difficulty in having a concept of what success or failure in such a project would entail. In this project, we cannot identify ways in which that has caused a real problem. But in general terms, problems could arise. The practitioners (facilitators, organisers, resource people) in a dialogue project have to have a commitment to encouraging dialogue even when the participants are reluctant. Practitioners will therefore tend to have an emotional commitment to the project, which may amount to a willingness to continue regardless of identifiable success or failure. This is by no means unreasonable: it is in the nature of such projects to encounter successive obstacles to dialogue and mutual understanding, and steadily to break them down. Today's impasse is the locus of tomorrow's breakthrough. However, a funding agency should be in a position to decide enough is enough – or, rather, that there has not been enough success to justify further expenditure. To be able to do this, the funding agency needs to have reasonable criteria for success and failure in dialogue projects.

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<sup>4</sup> Gunnar M. Sørbo, Wenche Hauge, Bente Hybertsen & Dan Smith, *Norwegian Assistance to Countries in Conflict*. Evaluation report 11.98. Oslo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1998.

<sup>5</sup> See J. Bayo Adekunye *et al*, *Norwegian Church Aid's Humanitarian and Peace-making Work in Mali*. Evaluation Report 6.97. Oslo: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1997. See also Kåre Lode, *Civil Society Takes Responsibility. Popular Involvement in the Peace Process in Mali*. PRIO Report 5/97. Oslo: International Peace Research Institute, Oslo, 1997.

## 5.8 Institutional competence

For PCR, the East Timor dialogue project was an important learning experience. We are unclear about the degree to which competence on East Timor, and on Indonesian and regional political issues more generally, has expanded within PCR during the period of the project. We do, however, note that PCR's engagement could not have continued and PCR could not have won confidence from the participants without a steady increase in knowledge. Since PCR is a teaching and research institution, we regard it as given that there will be ways in which this learning will be disseminated within the institution. In addition two project staff have been hired for the project as it continues into 2001.

In Sida, likewise, there has been some institutional learning because staff members have had to engage with the issues raised by the project, both in terms of east Timor and in terms of dialogue and conflict management. So far as we can see, this learning has been relatively limited because of changeover of relevant staff; three different people have been responsible for the project since 1998. In general, the project appears to have a low profile in Sida.

## 6. Conclusions

We believe the following points emerge from the analysis above:

- The project contains much to admire. We would highlight the involvement of key individuals from both sides of the various political divides in the conflict, the creative ideas the project produced, the durability of PCR's and Sida's commitment to it, and the flexibility displayed.
- A clear deficit in the project itself lies in the inability to raise gender issues. This problem is by no means unique to this project.
- Whatever reservations there may have been and may still be in Sida about its relationship to the project, Sida was right to conquer those reservations and fund the project. Given its lack of regional expertise, Sida was therefore equally right to rely on PCR, with which it has an extended relationship and in which it could be confident, and to accept the lead from on the MFA. The problem of lack of internal coherence was of relatively little salience.
- Despite Sida's correct decision to put its reservations to one side, they should also be taken seriously. Depending on which way round one looks at it, the issue is either the incompatibility of such projects with Sida, or Sida's institutional weaknesses in regard to dialogue projects. Sida has difficulties with short-term, *ad hoc* and unpredictable projects for which reporting requirements may rightly be different from Sida's norms. These difficulties should be addressed.
- A further problem is that Sida appears to lack knowledge about dialogue projects, which are an increasingly important component of peacebuilding, and which are highlighted in Sida's strategic framework adopted in 1999. This problem should also be addressed.
- The relationship with the MFA over this project was important, yet uncertain and it seems to have been unclear to each exactly what competence and resources the other had and how they could be mutually exploited. The outcome was functionally adequate in this case, but these uncertainties suggest that attention should also be given to this dimension. In cases where there

are no established strategic guidelines for Sida, the agency must turn to the MFA, as it did in this case. It seems that the MFA should have a structured place in ongoing discussions and decisions about such projects.

- The relationships of trust between the MFA and PCR and between Sida and PCR were the basis on which this project was built. Good enough on this occasion, the obvious question is, what would happen if an equally good project proposal came up from an organisation that had no track record of projects for Swedish MFA or Sida?
- Overall, therefore, we conclude that the important issue to discuss is not whether PCR's East Timor Dialogue was a good project, but how to carry out similar activities fluently.

## 7. Recommendations

We believe the following recommendations will help address the issues outlined in the preceding section:

- We encourage Sida not to be deterred by its difficulties with dialogue projects. They can do important work. However, it is clear that Sida needs to gain understanding of and develop guidelines for dialogue projects. We suggest two approaches. It may be worth setting up an informal task force composed of people with experience of dialogue projects as well as people with knowledge of Sida's workings. It could be regarded as a dialogue project on how to make dialogue projects work in Sida. At the same time, perhaps through such a task force, Sida should sponsor research on the methodology of dialogue projects. The mandate of this research should include (though not be limited to) an exploration of the meaning of the concepts of success and failure in the dialogue context. However, we urge Sida not to wait for the conclusions of the research before funding further dialogue projects; i.e., we recommend that Sida continue to show the flexibility required to support dialogue projects.
- The task force and the research should also take on the question of how to incorporate gender themes in dialogue work. It is self-evident that, if this is to be done, it must be done sensitively. There is a clear lack of competence in this component of the work among many dialogue practitioners and Sida would make an important contribution to dialogue work as a whole by helping build the required competence.
- We note that in the Norwegian MFA there is beginning to be some emphasis on resource groups for such projects, involving relevant personnel and departments within the MFA, the implementing organisations, and others knowledgeable on and interested in the issue. This may be a model for Sida to take up, especially when projects start to show signs of durability. This would be a means to involve the MFA in a structured way in discussions. It would also ensure open lines of communication between Sida and the implementing agency, and permit Sida to have full information without abandoning the valuable non-interventionist approach.
- Sida's budgeting and planning should set aside funds for as yet unidentified short-term projects, requiring relatively small grants (say, up to SEK 500,000 each). Proposals for such projects should be allowed to be shorter than normal, with more flexible guidelines, and without emphasis on deliverables. Likewise, the reporting requirements should be simpler and less time-

consuming. Repetitions of grants should be permitted as a project extends through further dialogue meetings, with the guideline that after one year it would normally be expected that project funding should shift from *ad hoc* to a time-frame of at least one year, more if appropriate.

- Sida needs a way of handling proposals for projects that do not fall within its established areas of competence, and that do not come from organisations with which it has a relationship of trust. To this end, it needs a database of potential project referees. At present, when Sida takes this kind of advice, it appears to be from organisations with which it already has a long-term relationship and a framework agreement. This is arbitrarily narrow. Sida can and should develop such a database in co-operation with other major agencies.

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