Afghanistan Reconciliation Task Force at American University

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Imagine Peace: Connecting Global Solutions on Reconciliation with an Afghanistan Ready for Peace

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AFGHANISTAN RECONCILIATION TASK FORCE AT AMERICAN UNIVERSITY

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Executive Summary

This report identifies several best practices for reconciliation programs used in conflicts around the world that might be useful to help promote reconciliation in Afghanistan.

The report was produced at the request of the U.S. Embassy in Kabul by a team of American University undergraduate researchers working at the School of International Service. The team researched scores of programs in over 30 countries before selecting those presented here.

Drawing on guidance from experienced peace scholars, field practitioners, local leaders, and authoritative voices on Afghanistan, the team's final selection represents the most successful programs that appeared suitable for potential use in the Afghan context. Ideally, these examples can inspire Afghans to consider innovative avenues for peace and reconciliation, should their country successfully move towards a peace accord and a process to consolidate peace. In such a scenario, Afghanistan and international partners would benefit from good examples that helped post-conflict reconciliation progress elsewhere.

The research team identified four categories of promising reconciliation programs and practices: Trauma Healing, Peace Education, Cohesion, and Gender Inclusivity.

Trauma Healing includes programs that help victims and perpetrators to overcome resentment and hatred to reach understanding and forgiveness. Truth and Reconciliation Commissions from around the world have combined storytelling with mass media in order to forge new national identities around shared trauma and take power away from violent actors. The South Africa process is the best known. Similarly, "Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities" workshops allowed victims and perpetrators of the Rwandan Genocide to come together, share their experiences, and commit to working together for peace and development.

Peace Education includes programs that focus on preparing people for a future together through education. "The Future Prowess Foundation" in Maiduguri, Nigeria, educates at-risk children from all sectors of society, including orphans of jihad, teaching them to learn, play, dream, and work towards better futures together, while the "Burundi Leadership Training Program" focused on teaching the country's leaders to listen to each other and collaborate. On the other side of the world, "Colombian Peace Marketing" used creative means and mass media in order to convince militants to demobilize and prepare their communities to accept them.

Cohesion includes programs that bring former opponents together for the sake of common goals. Mixed Soccer Leagues in post-ISIS Iraq allowed Christians and Muslims to come together for the love of the game, learning to respect and even befriend one another along the way. In the same way, the UN's Lake Chad Initiatives had people in frontier communities collaborate to design and implement security and economic initiatives in order to resolve common issues peacefully and effectively. "Justice and Security Dialogues" in Jos, Nigeria, encouraged constructive conversations between Nigerians around sexual assault and perceived police indifference, leading to corresponding improvements to existing law enforcement methods and structures.

Gender Inclusivity includes programs with an emphasis on promoting women's rights and political participation. The strategy of "Localization" has been used successfully to promote culturally specific implementation of gender-inclusive conflict resolution through community-led discussions. In a like manner, the "National Summit of Women and Peace" in Colombia, contributed to an increase in women's representation during the peace process and the inclusion of gender-specific provisions in the resulting peace agreement.

The report also includes several programs in an "Additional Programs of Interest" annex, which seem to hold promise, but where the team was unable to gather enough information and evidence to be certain of their success or potential applicability.

The programs presented in the report have demonstrated success in bringing people together. Though some programs have been far easier to implement than others, our research has revealed several common threads. First, the programs all needed to be **carefully designed and implemented** by dedicated teams, leaders, and communities. Second, they encouraged people to **relate on one another** based on common experiences. Third, they created or laid the groundwork for **constructive dialogue between opposing sides**. Fourth, they required **a combination of local buy-in and international support** to succeed. Fifth, teams and partners with substantial local and regional knowledge were key to **ensuring that local needs and concerns were addressed**. We believe that these five characteristics are vital to bringing about successful reconciliation in communities afflicted by violent conflict.

As the Afghan conflict evolves, and ideally moves toward a peaceful solution, the team hopes that the examples identified in the report will prove helpful to policymakers, donors, and local leaders as they set about the significant tasks ahead.

Introduction

This report was produced at the request of the U.S. Embassy in Kabul by a team of American University undergraduate researchers at the School of International Service. It is part of a broader partnership program between the U.S. Department of State and American colleges and universities. Tasked with identifying best practices for reconciliation from around the world, the team researched scores of programs in over 30 countries before selecting those presented here. These countries represented a wide range of experiences—some very different from Afghanistan and others with many similarities. With guidance from experienced peace scholars, field practitioners, local leaders, and authoritative voices on Afghanistan, the team eliminated many examples along the way. The team believes that the programs contained here represent some of the most viable possibilities for advancing peace and stability in the Afghan context, if suitably adapted and effectively implemented. Given the geographic diversity of the cases discussed below, each should be understood in its original context and, if applied to Afghanistan, adjusted to suit the complex realities of that country.

Our research does not presume to offer explicit recommendations for Afghanistan. Rather our report constitutes a review of uncommon successes from other regions plagued by violence and conflict in the hope that the examples can help inspire Afghans to develop new or improved initiatives and methods for peace and reconciliation should their country successfully move towards a peace accord and the long effort to consolidate a sustainable peace. In such a scenario, Afghanistan will benefit from good examples that helped reconciliation progress elsewhere, as well as continued support from international partners.

Trauma Healing

Less visible than physical scars and economic devastation, trauma is a key obstacle to community rehabilitation in the aftermath of violent conflict. Trauma fuels continuing violence and prevents people from functioning normally and constructively. As Rwandan sociologist and genocide survivor Esther Mujawayo puts it, “if

a war still goes on in your head, it is not over for you."[1] Truth and Reconciliation Commissions and Rwanda's Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities workshops are featured in this section as examples of programs that helped both victims and perpetrators to come to terms with the past and work towards a peaceful future.

Historically, most conflicts have been settled with harsh punishments for the defeated. The resulting resentment has often led to new waves of violence soon after. This is an example of an approach where forgiveness and understanding allowed for a new beginning.

Truth & Reconciliation Commission
Cases: South Africa & Sierra Leone

Background

Tasked with identifying past wrongdoings by governments or non-state actors and resolving the remaining conflict, Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (TRCs) have been utilized across the globe to reconcile longstanding conflict and build the foundation for lasting peace. The concept of TRCs grew prominent in the 1980s in Latin America[2] but did not truly come into fruition until the post-Apartheid state in South Africa[3] where the new majority-black government had to find a way to reconcile with the violence of the previous white-minority government. Violent segregation, kidnapping, and torture were used extensively on a large portion of the population. Following its success, TRCs were adopted across the globe in order to address different conflicts and challenges. Carrying the core principles set forth in the South African precedent, TRCs have been utilized in countries like Sierra Leone to help end civil wars and, in Latin America, have helped military governments transition into civilian ones. TRCs have found success in a wide variety of conflicts due to their adaptable nature, including those similar to the conflict in Afghanistan. If utilized and implemented well in Afghanistan, TRCs would be able to address the underlying drivers of conflict, and build the foundation for strong, lasting peace within communities.

Program Description

TRC systems are centered around the ideas of restorative justice. They seek to address past conflict through storytelling to achieve institutional reform and restore social bonds between the victims and their perpetrators. They do so by collecting of stories and narratives from both victims and perpetrators of violence and broadcasting them to the affected individuals. This mass collection of public narratives is an integral process that all TRCs implement.

In South Africa around 22,000 statements were collected,[4] while Sierra Leone collected 8,000 statements.[5] Once public narratives are collected, TRCs must determine which ones to broadcast and how. In both South Africa and Sierra Leone, the selected narratives allowed the TRCs to foster a new national identity around shared trauma by displaying narratives that showed violence against all parties.[6] By utilizing shared experiences and empathy, this process seeks to mend divided ties that often appear during conflict. South Africa broadcast the hearings over television and radio, allowing people from all over the country to hear these stories. In Sierra Leone, public hearings were conducted in Freetown and allowed the stories of victims and their perpetrators to be heard in a safe and welcoming environment. As depicted in the differences between South Africa and Sierra Leone, a hallmark of TRCs is that they can also be adapted based on the country, situation, or conflict. In South Africa, people who perpetrated violence could receive amnesty if they took part in the process while in Sierra Leone the TRC was legally bound to the country's legislature. Procedurally, TRCs can be conducted in a variety of ways. In Peru, participants gave their statements seated at the same table as the commissioners while in South Africa participants were seated in courtroom fashion with witnesses looking upward toward the commissioners. [7]

Evidence of Success

Evidence of success for TRCs can be seen in South Africa with its transformation of an oppressive apartheid state into a multiparty democracy. Members of its black community have also said the TRC helped reveal important truths and thus had a positive impact on South African society.[8] In Sierra Leone, the TRC pushed parliament to pass vital laws promoting women's equality[9] and pressured the government to form the National Commission for Social Action, which is designed to provide reparations[10] and cash transfers[11] to victims and those in need. Argentina's Truth and Reconciliation Commission was hailed by human rights activists as the most successful program of that nature in Latin America.[12] To address a history of abuses under a military government, the TRC helped reform the Constitution, set up a system of reparations, and published a report on the 9,000 victims kidnapped by the regime that later became a national bestseller.[13]

Applicability to Afghanistan

With the war in Afghanistan spanning nearly 40 years, the conflict will need to be defined and addressed. TRCs are a viable option as they can be changed to accommodate political and cultural situations. Afghanistan has a

history of conflict resolution with systems like the Pashtunwali Code and Loya Jirgas. With modifications to include these indigenous practices, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission could prove a key model for a post-conflict Afghanistan. However, implementing a TRC with support from all sides in Afghanistan will be difficult due to the length and brutality of this war, as many actors may remain bitter or spiteful. Although this cannot be ignored, a TRC designed and implemented by Afghans is worth pursuing and, if a local model can be agreed upon, it will help facilitate a peaceful post-war transition.

Under normal circumstances, forgiveness requires grace and compassion. In the aftermath of crimes against humanity, this sentiment is doubly true. This is an example of Rwandans displaying extraordinary amounts of both for the sake of a united, prosperous future.

Healing & Rebuilding Our Communities
Case: Rwanda

Background

Healing and Rebuilding our Communities (HROC) is a curative, community level program developed to bring together people from opposing sides of a conflict to identify and address the consequences of violence in their lives.[14] Established in 2003 by Quaker groups in the United States, Rwanda, and Burundi, the goal was to create a program that would allow divided communities a chance to rebuild. Through studying the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, they developed a local workshop program focused on restorative justice. It has since been used in other conflicts, most notably during the reconciliation process following the Rwandan genocide. HROCs have found success in a wide variety of conflicts due to their ability to bring opposing sides of conflict together, build trust, and reconnect communities.[15] If utilized well in Afghanistan, HROCs should be able to bring warring communities together, build trust among opposing sides, and lay the framework for reconciliation.

Program Description

The HROC program is comprised of 20 people, with half being the victims of violence and the other half being the perpetrators. Divided into three days, each day of the program focuses on taking new steps towards community reconciliation. The first day is concentrated on defining essential concepts like trauma and reconciliation. Since many cultures lack translations for these Western constructs, HROC must work within these cultures to

identify the local or cultural concept equivalents for those terms. The second day is focused on truth-telling and reconciliation between both groups. Finally, the third day focuses on rebuilding community bonds by having participants plan community building projects and engage in local cultural celebrations. The entire process is overseen by three facilitators who are trained in conflict transformation and simply maintain the program, only interfering in the process if the situation becomes unstable. A month after the workshop is complete, HROC trainers return to the community to check on its progress and train 10 to 15 locals in reconciliation techniques.[16]

Evidence of Success

HROC has proven itself to be a popular and trusted program in the communities with which it has engaged. According to HROC international organizer David Zarembka, as of 2017, the program had been used in at least 3,000 communities globally.[17] In being a voluntary program, this growth demonstrates the success and popularity among previously warring communities. Participants join the program of their own volition and are not paid or forced to join. This is significant because it is conducted in parts of the world where missing a few days of work can financially hurt individuals, and topics discussed can be difficult or traumatic. The program started small in Rwanda and Burundi, even during the latter's civil war, but found increased demand overtime in both countries. Arcadian University Professor Bill Jacobsen, who assisted with the Rwanda and Burundi programs, said towns began to ask for the program to be conducted in their communities so often that demand began to outpace supply.[18] Furthermore, Zarembka has said that initial test-runs in both Kenya and The Democratic Republic of the Congo have expanded significantly and that HROC has since been used in six sub-Saharan countries including South Sudan, Uganda, and Nigeria.[19]

Applicability to Afghanistan

If peace is going to be achieved in Afghanistan, the trauma of everyday people will need to be addressed, and this will need to happen at the community level. Although Afghanistan has existing community reconciliation programs, like "Peace by Piece" which enables Afghans to design and implement their own rebuilding methods, the HROC model is promising because of its ability to work within individual communities and promote reconciliation on a local level. As mentioned previously, Afghans also have a rich history of solving conflicts and disputes through

traditional methods like Loya Jirgas. HROC can provide additional bottom-up, grassroots support to Afghanistan's various and dispersed communities, because it uses local cultural concepts to achieve community peace.

Peace Education

One of the key drivers of armed conflict is that people do not know how to talk to one another. Peace Education activities seek to give different people the skills, tools, and knowledge to communicate effectively and peacefully, with the partial aim of healing communities where cycles of revenge serve as drivers of conflict. In this section, Nigeria, Burundi and Colombia have been selected as countries where, like in Afghanistan, revenge plays an important role in ongoing violence. The Future Prowess Foundation is highlighted as a program that is successfully teaching Nigeria's next generation to live, play, and work together. Similarly, Burundi's Leadership Training Program provides an example of effective adult leadership instruction, and Colombian Peace Marketing is explored as a method of mass education, convincing fighters and their communities that they have nothing to fear if they come home.

Educating children to reject violence and work together from an early age is key to the success of long-term peace and reconciliation efforts. This is an example of an Islamic peace education program that has given some of the most vulnerable Nigerians an opportunity to succeed.

The Future Prowess Islamic Foundation
Case: Nigeria

Background

Nigerian security forces and an international coalition have been locked in conflict with the jihadist terrorist organization "Boko Haram" for approximately 11 years. The insurgency, based in Northeast Nigeria, has killed thousands of Nigerians and displaced millions in waves of violence. Though the 2015 "West African Offensive" pushed Boko Haram out of vast swathes of territory and a power struggle between its leaders and ISIS sympathizers ensued soon after, Boko Haram is far from defeated. On the contrary, it continues to expand and recruit, mainly from around the destitute Lake Chad region, while launching hundreds of attacks annually.[20]

Program Description

Under the leadership of Zannah Mustapha, the first Future Prowess Islamic Foundation school was founded in Maiduguri, a city at the center of the Boko Haram insurgency in 2007 with 36 pupils. Its mission was to provide free education to children affected by the fighting, particularly orphans. Today, the Foundation boasts two schools with a capacity of over 500 pupils and a vocational training center for widows of war.[21]

Before opening the first school, Mr. Mustapha included the local ward leader, religious leaders, and widows whose children would be educated in the school in its planning board.[22] When the widows told him that they wanted Islamic education to be included in the Western-style curriculum, Mustapha did as they asked. Other key issues identified were the need for healthcare, food, and uniforms, which the Foundation provides for free. This respect for and engagement with both spiritual and official authority figures in the target region has been key to the success of other peace education initiatives, including the Salam Institute's work on Islamic Peace Education in Chad and Niger.[23]

In a region fiercely contested by Boko Haram, whose name is Arabic for "Western Education is a Sin," the Foundation school does not require armed security, nor has it closed in the face of intense fighting. The reason for this is the Foundation's "spectrum of allies." In Mr. Mustapha's words, the schools are "deeply embedded in the community," meaning that widows and children of Boko Haram fighters, Nigerian security forces, and local traditional and religious leaders all attend the school.[24] Boko Haram fighters will not kill their own children. As a result, the school is safer than almost anywhere else in Maiduguri.

The school makes use of "mass counselling" by traditional and religious leaders who encourage children to accept their pasts and dream of a better future.[25] Psychologists are on hand to support the children, with initial examinations being performed before children start classes. Equally important is immersing students in a "community of friends." Students are regularly bonding through competitive activities such as sports tournaments between mixed "houses" made up of students from different backgrounds. Finally, the school's curriculum challenges children to understand complexity without discarding religion. Instead, they are taught to see religion as something far bigger than anything a warlord might push them to believe.

Evidence of Success

While in school, children are guided to adopt a new superordinate identity as "Future Prowess Students" to transcend old enmities, resentments, and stigmas. In the words of Barbara Wien, a renowned peace scholar at American University, this goal "resonates with the best peace education studies."[26] Over 1,000 graduates have left the Foundation's schools since 2007. Some have gone on to university, others to gainful employment, but none have joined the conflict.[27] Equally importantly, the school has never been attacked in 13 years of its existence, despite two thirds of its student body being female.[28] Its continued operation and expansion are expensive, but it is supported by international donors including the UNHCR, UNICEF, and the ICRC.[29] The local Borno State Emergency Agency has also recognized and funded the Foundation's work.

Applicability to Afghanistan

Afghanistan is home to millions of at-risk children without access to education.[30] They are particularly vulnerable to recruitment by the Taliban, street gangs, drug traffickers, and other violent organizations, and many will grow into the next generation engaging in violence. Fortunately, Afghanistan also has a long and storied Sufi tradition, emphasizing learning and tolerance, that can hopefully be leveraged in a peace education program for these children.[31] In addition, an effort can be made to engage religious and traditional authority figures from all factions, ethnic groups, and regions to inspire and encourage children to dream of a better future together as is being done in the Future Prowess schools.[32] With funding and support from USAID, the UN, the Afghan government, and other donors, schools modelled after Nigeria's Future Prowess Islamic Foundation could give many Afghan children a renewed chance at life. If such flagship programs prove effective, perhaps they could provide a new model for the regular Afghan school system to follow as it prepares Afghanistan's younger generations for peace.

It can be challenging to compromise with a long-time foe, but in a shared homeland, it is in the interests of all to cooperate. This is an example of a program that facilitated discussions among Burundian leaders to help them set aside their differences and move towards inclusive governance.

Leadership Training Program
Case: Burundi

Background

Rwanda's less well-known neighbor, Burundi, suffered from over thirty years of genocidal riots, reprisals, and a savage 1993 civil war before Tutsi and Hutu leaders were able to put aside their differences during the 2000-2008 peace process. During the civil war alone, over 300,000 Burundians were killed[33]. In addition, according to the National Security Archive, approximately 287,000 predominantly Hutu Burundian refugees were in Southern Rwanda in 1994[34]. These refugees, already traumatized by the violence in their own country, are believed to have contributed to the Rwandan genocide.

Program Description

The Burundi Leadership Training Program (BLTP) was founded in 2002 by Howard Wolpe and Steve McDonald of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars (WWICS) in an effort to help "diverse leaders from across the political and socio-economic spectrum to build their collaborative capacities" to aid Burundi's planned transition from civil war to a stable democracy.[35] To help lend credibility to their initiative, Wolpe and McDonald asked two widely respected and trusted Burundians, former Minister of Human Rights Eugene Nindorera and Fabien Nsengimana, to join the project management team for the new NGO.[36] After three months of surveying a representative sample of Burundians for nominations, Wolpe and McDonald chose 100 men and women to take part in the BLTP.[37] Half of the group was chosen from political classes, the Army, and rebel organizations, and half were civil society leaders from churches, women's organizations, youth, and the business community in recognition of the difference between elites and common Burundians.[38] These leaders were invited to several workshops focused around key leadership skills like teambuilding, negotiation, effective communication, and strategic planning. The workshops were structured specifically to build trust and remind the participants of their need to collaborate to move forward. The process itself is based on the principle of hands-on learning, with interactive exercises and simulations designed to help participants improve their leadership skills together.[39] Extensive funding from the World Bank's "Post-Conflict Fund" and USAID allowed the program to continue over an 18-month period, with the promise that more funding from other donors like the European Community and the UK Department for International Development would be provided for further training in the future.[40] This guaranteed the sustainability of the project and gave it enough time for Burundians to eventually take full ownership.[41]

Evidence of Success

The program received an "enthusiastic reception" from the leaders of Burundi's political parties, people who were seen at the time to "rarely agree on anything."[42] The BLTP's good initial results in producing better, more confident leaders led to requests for extensions of the program from leaders of Burundi's political parties, army and law enforcement bodies, as well as the administration of President Pierre Nkurunziza.[43] In fact, in 2007, a "key leaders" BLTP-style workshop was held involving all four living former presidents and the leaders of the legislative branch in order to help resolve a constitutional dispute. Reviewing the BLTP in 2015, governance scholars Susanna Campbell and Peter Uvin stated that "BLTP workshops did effect a personal transformation in the way people perceive themselves in relation to other participants" and that "the BLTP provided a venue for decision-makers to come together informally and relate relatively openly with one another."[44] Starting with the original 100 participants in 2002, hundreds more have been trained since, including Burundians willing to learn how to train others.[45] The BLTP has since become a stand-alone NGO, separate from the WWICS. According to Elizabeth McClintock, the then-Lead Facilitator for the Burundi Leadership Training Program, the program had particular success in the Burundian army, improving participants' ability to analyze problems and their willingness to listen to each other.[46]

Applicability to Afghanistan

Burundi faced, as Afghanistan does now, the need to create a balanced government structure that could effectively bring together divided ethnic groups. Training the leaders of tomorrow how to accept one another and collaborate is vital to enabling Afghans to help themselves, which hopefully could also reduce future reliance on foreign assistance. It was found in Burundi that an emphasis on local buy-in, achieved by identifying local leaders to participate through an inclusive polling process, made the program more effective and legitimate across all regions of the country. Existing programs in Afghanistan targeting rising political figures such as the Afghanistan 21 Young Leaders Initiative (AYLI) could well benefit from the framework provided by BLTP[47]. Should negotiations between the Afghan government and the Taliban be successful, such a program could be valuable for supporting an inclusive, functioning government.

Even the most stubborn enemies share some similarities. Appealing to these helps people to let go of the differences that led them to war. This is an example of the common symbolism of mothers, Christmas and soccer bringing Colombians back together.

Peace Marketing
Case: Colombia

Background

Rooted in centuries of economic inequality, Colombia's civil war is one of the most complicated conflicts in the world. It is a web of alliances and rivalries between government forces, right-wing paramilitary fighters, organized crime, and Leftist guerillas. It has resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of civilians and displaced many more in over 50 years of jungle warfare, urban terrorism, and rural skirmishes where all sides have committed atrocities.[48] Before the 2016 peace deal, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia—People's Army (FARC-EP) was one of the major Leftist groups involved in the conflict.

Program Description

In 2006, advertising executive Jose Miguel Sokoloff was approached by the Colombian Ministry of Defense with a unique opportunity. The Colombian government wanted him to develop a marketing campaign to persuade FARC fighters to come out of the jungle while convincing Colombia's people to welcome them back into society. Mr. Sokoloff gradually adopted a key guiding principle: FARC insurgents were as much hostages to their organization as the victims that they had terrorized.[49] They feared rejection by their communities, and more importantly, by their families, if they ever tried to demobilize and return home.[50]

One particularly meaningful way in which Mr. Sokoloff and his team were able to reach these fighters was through their mothers. In 2013, 31 mothers agreed to provide Mr. Sokoloff with childhood pictures of their sons and daughters along with written and recorded messages telling the fighters that "before you were a guerrilla, you were my child. Come home because I will always be waiting for you at Christmastime."[51] These were then distributed and broadcast throughout the jungle via helicopter. Colombia's mothers showed remarkable courage in their willingness to come forward despite the majority living in FARC territory.[52] Their display of unconditional love and grace was an incredibly moving reminder to their children that they always had a home and a community to return to if they chose to give up a life of violence.

Furthermore, as in any marketing campaign, timing and aesthetics were incredibly important. Drawing upon his own knowledge as a native Colombian and an experienced team of locals, Sokoloff chose two other key symbols for his campaigns: Christmas and soccer, Colombia's national sport. Between 2006 and 2014, his charming Christmas displays, demonstrating a keen understanding of his audience's geography, literally lit up the jungle to show FARC fighters the way out.[53] During the 2011 U-20 World Cup, deflated soccer balls rained down on FARC territory from the skies, each signed by fans, celebrities, and soccer players.[54] Soldiers, politicians, former FARC commanders, schoolchildren, and local villagers all contributed to the campaigns through messages and small gifts, fulfilling Sokoloff's vision: a coalition of Colombians asking fighters to come home.

Evidence of Success

Sokoloff's work has been credited with contributing to over 18,000 fighters coming home over a period of 8 years. Indeed, his projects were so effective that FARC leaders demanded that they be stopped as a condition for negotiations during the peace process.[55] The 2013 *Mother's Voice* campaign, for example, was tied directly to 218 fighters leaving the FARC.[56] Other campaigns have been responsible for hundreds of fighters demobilizing, with peaks occurring consistently during the holiday season.

Applicability to Afghanistan

Though Colombia in 2006 was a different situation than Afghanistan today, the same ideas presented here could be applied to the Afghan context, especially in coordination with former insurgents. For instance, when trying to convince remaining dissidents to demobilize after peace negotiations have concluded. Afghanistan has an abundance of cultural and communal resources from which to draw in order to promote reconciliation efforts on a grand scale. Like Colombian mothers of fighters, Afghan mothers have been waiting for their children to return for years, if not decades. The People's Peace Movement, the country's largest grassroots non-violence movement, and the country's wealth of artists, musicians and sports stars are additional possible assets to an Afghan Peace Marketing program.[57] To succeed, such a campaign would need to be guided by experienced professionals with a native understanding of local geographies, cultures, norms and sensitivity to regional nuances.[58] Ultimately, only Afghans have the power to convince their compatriots that there is truly no shame in coming home.

Cohesion

Convincing people to live together after years of violence is not an easy task, but with creativity, several countries have made significant progress in recent years. In this section, Mixed Soccer Leagues in the vicinity of Mosul, Iraq, after its liberation from the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) has been chosen as an example of a program that gave different groups a chance to learn to interact amicably through play. Sports have been used widely for these ends, but this example seemed a particularly well-documented case of the potential benefits. Regional Program Design (RPD) in the Lake Chad Basin is featured because of how it brought frontier communities together to address common interests. Finally, Justice and Security Dialogues in Jos, Nigeria, stand out as an example of a community learning to think together to confront a common tragedy.

Just like on the battlefield, hustling, sweating, and bleeding together on a sports field has a special way of uniting people. Unlike war though, the only true division is between teams. This is an example of soccer reconnecting Muslims and Christians in post-ISIS Iraq.

Mixed Soccer Leagues
Case: Iraq

Background

As popular euphoria faded after Mosul's liberation from ISIS in 2017, divisions soon began to appear among the newly freed population. Christians who had previously left in the face of execution or forced conversion were unhappy with ongoing Muslim migration into some of the last Christian enclaves left in the country. Some saw Muslims as a collective threat and believed that those who stayed were supportive of ISIS. In turn, Muslims, especially the Shiites, resented Christians for these attitudes and accused those who fled of disloyalty to their city. While sports programs in Bosnia and Herzegovina were considered, the example of soccer reconnecting Muslims and Christians in post-ISIS Iraq is well documented and seems more applicable for Afghanistan.

Program Description

In 2018, a researcher from Stanford, Salma Mousa, conducted a study on the effects of intergroup contact through sport and post-conflict social cohesion. Mousa assigned three additional players to 51 randomly recruited Christian soccer teams operating around Erbil and Bakhdida, cities close to Mosul.[59] On some teams, the new

players were fellow Christians, while on others, the new players were Muslim. These teams then competed in four leagues, with an additional non-experimental league created as a control group made up of only all-Christian teams. The majority of Christian participants were around 24 years old, unmarried, had a high school degree, and made around $500 per month.[60] They held negative prejudices towards Muslims but displayed anti-sectarian attitudes, meaning that they favored a united Iraq.

While working on this program, Mousa learned three important lessons. First, intergroup contact had to be endorsed by respected community leaders to succeed. In this case, the Humanitarian Nineveh Relief Organization, an NGO operated by the Syriac Catholic Church and staffed by locals, supported Mousa's project.[61] Their cooperation made it more socially acceptable for Christian teams to sign on to the project. Equally important, they were able to provide Mousa with two key pieces of information. Where Mousa had originally envisioned a joint drama club, her partners formed focus groups that ultimately informed her that locals were far more interested in soccer.[62] These groups, along with consultations with church leaders and soccer coaches, made it clear that Christians needed to be in the majority in order to participate, leading to Mousa's decision to only add three additional players to teams. Second, Mousa found that it was important to be open about the goals of the effort. She was honest with all of the players. Participants were informed that they would be playing with Muslims and had to give consent that they would keep all political activities off the soccer pitch. Social integration was not promoted or discussed beyond the inclusion of the Muslim players.[iii] Third, Mousa found that the soccer pitch provided two optimal conditions for intergroup contact: a cooperative context where Muslims and Christians were on the same team and had to work together, and equal power status for all players where no existing societal power dynamics were reinforced.

Evidence of Success

Mousa observed that although intergroup contact did not radically shift "generalized tolerance" toward Muslims among Christians, it did have significant and lasting behavioral changes.[63] In the teams with Muslim players, Christians proved more likely to sign up for mixed teams in the future, vote for a Muslim player on another team to receive a sportsmanship award, and train with Muslims six months after the end of the intervention.[64] They were are also more likely to believe that coexistence with Muslims is possible and visit Muslim-owned restaurants.

Qualitative observations included Christian teammates joining Muslim holiday dinners during Ramadan, limited family interaction during social gatherings, and soccer games and self-censoring by players of the same religious group.[65] Though security and referees were on hand to prevent fights, serious arguments were uncommon, and when they occurred, tended to be between members of the same group. Additionally, though some teams initially resisted the condition that they accept new players, particularly if they were Muslim, all 51 teams in the experimental leagues ultimately agreed to participate.[66]

Applicability to Afghanistan

Mousa's project is currently being replicated in other Iraqi cities, as well as in Colombia and in Lebanon, showing that it is possible to replicate with relative ease and low cost with few structural changes. There are similar programs within Afghanistan, such as "Skateistan," which has been successful in providing young boys and girls the opportunity to learn how to skateboard.[67] While this is excellent for long term reconciliation in future generations, programs like Salma Mousa's have more immediate impacts. USAID has already been assisting municipalities in public-private partnerships to build local infrastructure, including soccer fields, through the Community Cohesion Initiative.[68] As a short-term mechanism to improve inter-group behavior in the context of a peace settlement, Mousa's model could prove effective in Afghanistan if implemented in conjunction with local mosques, tribal elders, or respected NGOs. Though security concerns in particular will need to be taken into account given ISIS and other terrorist groups' propensity for attacking sporting events, sports like soccer, boxing and cricket bring Afghans together—regardless of creed or political affiliation.[69] It is only a matter of getting people to play on the same field.

Frontiers can be some of the most unstable places in the world. In conflicts where various state and non-state actors have a stake in the outcome, national borders are mere lines on a map. This example encourages collaboration among frontier communities to improve their lives.

Regional Program Design in the Lake Chad Basin
Cases: Mali, Burkina Faso, & Niger

Background

The Lake Chad Basin is one of the most unstable regions in the world. Ongoing violence, fueled by the Boko Haram insurgency, has left millions of Nigerians, Burkinabé, Nigeriens, Chadians, and Cameroonians in dire

need of humanitarian assistance. Resource-strapped regional governments struggle to implement effective border security measures, which enables insurgent groups to recruit and fund themselves through human, arms, and drug trafficking, resulting in high levels of violence and catastrophic outcomes for civilians.

Program Description

The United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (UN PBF) has been active in the Lake Chad Basin since 2014, implementing several cross-border initiatives in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger focusing on regional cooperation.[70] These initiatives fund a variety of projects, including peace education camps, reinforcing border security and promoting local enterprise. Local leaders and farmers were targeted in an effort to induce greater cross-border collaboration by strengthening joint security arrangements and reducing conflicts over scarce natural resources. For example, grazing grounds for cattle were identified as frequent sources of conflict. Farmers from each of the border communities were brought together to establish rules and practices to resolve such disputes peacefully. Also, to strengthen border security, local security forces were convened in order to establish a common alert system.

Evidence of Success

The UN PBF's approach was endorsed by the UN Security Council in the United Nations Integrated Security Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS) as a best practice and should be regarded as an important test case for truly regional project design and implementation[71]. The early indicators are promising—between 2014 and 2018, 100 percent of local leaders involved in the UN PBF's programs have reported a positive effect on conflict-resolution efforts in the area.[72] Furthermore, the program promoted gender-inclusivity in a region where it has traditionally been lacking—42 percent of participants were women.

Applicability to Afghanistan

Over the past two decades, various militia and terrorist groups have exploited Afghanistan's notoriously porous borders in order to continue operating despite immense US military pressure. As a result, Afghanistan's frontier regions have suffered tremendous violence. If successful negotiations occur between the Taliban and the Afghan Government in Kabul, a coordinated response towards ISIS and other mutual threats might aid a reduction in violence. In particular, Pashtun populations on both sides of the Durand Line could benefit from initiatives

similar to the UN PBF's in the Lake Chad Basin by encouraging greater coordination as they develop a strategy for joint self-defense and economic rehabilitation.

When people lose faith in law enforcement, not only do people take matters into their own hands, it also becomes more difficult to identify community issues. This is an example of a Nigerian city that used dialogue to restore trust between law enforcement and residents.

Justice & Security Dialogues
Cases: Nepal, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, & Iraq

Background

Justice and Security Dialogues (JSD), developed by the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), have proved powerful mechanisms for, among others, Nepali, Nigerian, Burkinabé, and Iraqi citizens to communicate with civil authorities and law enforcement instead of resorting to violence. In the city of Jos, in Nigeria, dissatisfaction with the police came to a head in 2016 when a mob burned down a police station in the district of Angwan Rukuba.[73]

Program Description

JSDs bring police officers, civil society representatives, citizens, and key stakeholders in communities together to identify collective issues. Lasting approximately one year, dialogues are meant to allow communities to overcome divisions, fears, and insecurities by voicing concerns, identifying shared issues, fostering understanding and building relationships in a safe space.[74] After successfully helping Jos to overcome the 2016 dispute, USIP returned the next year in order to help its people to confront the epidemic of sexual violence sweeping their community. With USIP's help, 40 local community leaders, police officers, residents, and officials came together for focused dialogues during a three-day workshop. Then, they went to Angwan Rukuba's public hall in order to listen to the stories of victims of sexual assault.

Evidence of Success

As a result of these dialogues, it became clear that a shocking percent of sexual assaults were not reported due to the (often accurate) perception that local police were either corrupt or untrained in dealing with sexual violence. In response, the local police department created a specialized 'gender desk' in Nasasarawa Gwom, the

district that the dialogues had identified as the most problematic in terms of sexual violence, to deal with cases of sexual violence. Four officers were initially assigned to training courses on cases of sexual violence as part of this effort. Furthermore, local partners like the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding, the Center for Peace Advancement in Nigeria and the Jos Chapter of the International Federation of Female Lawyers contributed by providing training and support for police, community leaders and residents to communicate more effectively regarding sexual violence. The local government, USIP, and a local radio station also contributed to providing and disseminating supporting materials to facilitate communication between communities and law enforcement about sexual violence. These actions gave sorely lacking legitimacy to the police and government while making the community a safer place for women and children.

Applicability to Afghanistan

In general, Justice and Security Dialogues could be useful tools to effectively identify and resolve root causes of violence in Afghan communities. Though this model demonstrated particular success addressing gendered violence in Nigeria, it can also be applied to a range of other community-wide issues, as shown in at least 12 other successful cases according to USIP.[75] The key idea is facilitating dialogues between various sectors of target societies so that they can identify and come up with answers to their most pressing issues. Once this is done, they often already have at least some of the resources to implement solutions. If presented through the language of pre-existing indigenous practices like *jirgas* and with the help of knowledgeable and influential local partners, the new methods pioneered by JSD could potentially be powerful tools to help Afghans talk to one another rather than turning to violence in the context of implementing an Afghan peace accord.

Gender Inclusivity

The drafters understand that gender inclusivity remains a contentious topic in Afghanistan and that the examples highlighted here may not be immediately applicable. However, many prominent scholars have noted that the inclusion of women in peace processes and a close attention to gender are key determinants of lasting peace. Supporting this idea, the U.N. has made gender inclusivity a priority in post-conflict reconciliation through the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda and landmark gender inclusion resolutions, such as U.N. Security Council Resolution (SCR) 1325.[76] These are internationally recognized affirmations of the crucial role women play in

conflict resolution, reconciliation, and peace negotiations, as well as recommendations for increased, meaningful representation of women in peace processes.[77] We believe that Colombia's 2013 National Summit of Women and a "localization" strategy could serve as important frameworks for future efforts to create a sustainable, inclusive peace.

For too long, women have been an afterthought in peace processes when they are often the people who suffer the most during conflict. In 2013, Colombia women came together to demand that their voices be heard and, in a country where gender biases are alive and well, both sides listened.

National Summit of Women & Peace
Case: Colombia

Background

Spanning a period of over fifty years, the war between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia—People's Army (FARC-EP) displaced over 6,000,000 people and caused over 200,000 fatalities. As is the case in many other conflicts, women were disproportionately impacted by trauma.[78] However, in a departure from most cases around the world, Colombia's peace process included a concerted effort to involve women and center gender issues as a fundamental part of the negotiations. Although this inclusion was supported by a number of programs and organizations, one of the largest and most notable initiatives was the National Summit of Women and Peace.

Program Description

The 2013 National Summit of Women and Peace was designed to create a visible platform for women's inclusion. The summit was organized by multiple grassroots civil society organizations in Colombia and was supported by UN Women. Over 400 women from almost every region of Colombia participated in a series of broad discussions on the ongoing peace process, what peace would look like for them, and female security.[79]

Evidence of Success

The Summit had several positive outcomes. Two weeks after the Summit, the government and the FARC recognized the "important role of women in conflict-prevention, conflict-resolution, and peacebuilding."[80] The representation of women on the negotiation team increased to 20 percent by 2015, and 43 percent of FARC delegates were women. The peace talks also included the first-ever Gender Sub-Commission, which was designed to address gender-sensitive issues raised by the Summit's attendees. Tangible gains for women in the resulting peace

agreements included provisions on property rights, a rebuke of amnesty for sexual violence committed during the conflict, and measures to decrease gender-based violence.[81]

Applicability to Afghanistan

A program similar to the National Summit of Women and Peace in the context of peace negotiations and a peace settlement could prove beneficial to the overall peace process in Afghanistan in a variety of ways. Such a program could tap into the highly organized Afghan Women's Network and its existing partnerships with grassroots civil society organizations, as well as using the tradition of the Loya Jirga, in order to create an institutionalized framework for gender discussions. The May 2019 Loya Jirga saw women constituting 30 percent of 3,200 delegates, though many were reportedly marginalized by the male delegates.[82] If a similar form of assembly exclusively for women or with a higher female delegate percentage were held, it could prove a fertile ground for substantial discussions on an inclusive peace process. A singular event, supported by ongoing community level discussions through related programs, could have a strong, positive impact on the peace process by providing an institutionalized forum for women's involvement. Though it may be difficult to convince the Taliban to accept such an event or related gender programming, the potential benefits make it worthwhile to make a serious effort to build several official channels for women's inclusion into a peacebuilding and peace-sustaining process. A special summit or jirga could be one such avenue.

Frequently, gaps exist between international agreements on best practices and the programs that are implemented within more traditional societies. This strategy calls for local ownership and implementation of gender-inclusive policies that align with specific cultural norms.

Localization
Cases: Uganda, the Philippines, & Nepal

Background

A key component of facilitating culturally sensitive and feasible gender inclusive policies and programs involves working with local community leaders. This is particularly critical in cultural contexts that have a history of gender-based discrimination and women facing significant challenges, such as Afghanistan. The Global Network of

Women Peacebuilders (GWNP) has created a strategy called localization, which emphasizes culturally specific implementations of previously stated U.N. SCR 1325 and the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda based on a local understanding of gender inclusivity. Moreover, localization workshops are designed to identify the actions needed to implement and promote coordination across international, national, and local communities, including harmonizing National Action Plans (NAPs) with community-level policies.[83]

Program Description

By bringing together key community stakeholders, representing government, religious, women, and youth interests, the GWNP's localization strategy works to pinpoint pre-existing NAPs on gender inclusion and reconcile them with community interests. Through the development of community-level action plans that support the larger NAPs, international and national policies are brought in line with community norms. Localization follows a three-step process spanning several days. To begin, workshops are held with stakeholders to introduce the concept of gender equality, WPS, U.N. SCR 1325, and what these concepts mean in the local context. Next, groups develop local policies that work to incorporate these concepts at the community level. Lastly, a "training of trainers" is held to help distribute localization guidelines to the rest of the country. The program has four key learning objectives for each country. First, it is designed to raise local awareness of the WPS agenda and specific national policies dealing with gender. Then, it works to promote a sense of local ownership of the WPS agenda through tangible steps. Following this, it fosters cooperation across local, national, and international governing bodies, through the alignment of local practices with international norms. Finally, it helps contribute to broader implementation of the WPS agenda globally.[84] Currently, GNWP has implemented this strategy in over a dozen countries.[85]

Evidence of Success

The promise of the localization strategy can be seen in several countries around the world, like Uganda, the Philippines, and Nepal. As a result of local action plans developed in the targeted workshops, there has been increased reporting and better responses to sexual and gender-based violence in Uganda and the Philippines, and an increase in women running in local elections in Nepal. Additionally, in Nepal, the WPS agenda has been integrated into not only the school curriculum but also training programs for the police and the army.[86] A 2014 monitoring report of Nepal indicated areas of progress, including increased awareness of the WPS and more women in

leadership positions.[87] This strategy and its outcomes in Nepal and the Philippines have been cited five times since 2012, in both U.N. reports and by the U.N. Secretary-General, as a key tool for success. Moreover, it was included in the 2015 Global Study on U.N. SCR 1325, which evaluated global progress toward fully implementing this resolution.[88] The Global Study recommended that states "support and invest in participatory processes, social accountability tools, and localization initiatives to link global, national and local efforts" of peace processes.[89]

Applicability to Afghanistan

Localization, or a similar program that convenes community leaders, could prove useful in Afghanistan because it involves a community-led discussion of "women and peace" issues, while considering cultural context and working to create local ownership. In this case, Afghanistan does have an existing National Action Plan, developed in 2015.[90] Localization also allows for each local community to identify what steps are needed, permitting the tailoring of programs to suit local needs and creating a sense of legitimacy. However, the research team understands this will be a key challenge in Afghanistan, as a gender-inclusive peace will not be feasible without some support or buy-in from the Taliban, who may well resist working from the pre-existing NAP or crafting new local policies. Still, steps must be taken to include women both formally and informally, as their inclusion can have positive impacts locally as well as nationally.[91] While some of the specific workshop logistics of localization may not be feasible in a peace agreement with the Taliban, the concept of community-level discussions regarding what gender-inclusive peace looks like, as well as the development of specific local-level actions that work toward that goal, would assist with increasing legitimacy of the resulting peace agreement. By utilizing the powerful existing networks of Afghan women's organizations, national government policies, support from international partners, and promising inroads with the Taliban regarding women's rights, there may well be space for community-level discussions on gender inclusion. Through international, national, and community support, a strategy of localization can be used to lay the foundations for peace and increased female security following the reconciliation of the Taliban and the Afghan government.

Conclusion

All of the programs presented here have demonstrated success in helping former opponents to live together. It is our hope that at least some of them might be used as frameworks for reconciliation efforts in the context of an Afghan Peace Process.

Some programs were far easier to implement than others. Long-term transformative programs like The Islamic Prowess Foundation and Cross-Border Initiatives in the Lake Chad Basin require huge amounts of funding and international and local coordination. Similarly, Colombian Peace Marketing hinged on enthusiastic government support and military participation because of the complicated, expensive operations needed to carry out Sokoloff's creative vision. In contrast, short-term behavior-changing programs like the Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities workshops and Salma Mousa's Mixed Soccer Leagues cost relatively little and were easily replicable across various settings. Gender related programs will be particularly challenging given Taliban attitudes and practices. Furthermore, despite the successes of the programs suggested here, peace processes in cases like Colombia and Burundi have been destabilized by external political factors, showing that the political class' willingness to implement and sustain post-conflict recovery plans is critical to long-term peace efforts.

Our research revealed several common threads between successful reconciliation efforts around the world:

- They required careful nurturing to take root and flourish. They would not have been successful without the dedicated leaders, teams, and communities behind their implementation.
- They encouraged people to relate to one another, focusing on experiences of conflict, common symbolism (e.g. mothers, holidays, sports, etc.), and joint identities.
- They created or laid the groundwork for spaces where people from opposing sides could engage in constructive dialogue.
- They depended on a combination of local buy-in *and* international support. Local willingness to participate and contribute were equally, if not more, important than funding, recognition, and training from international actors.

- They have all depended on teams and partners with vast regional knowledge to modify their core ideas into nuanced initiatives sensitive to local needs and concerns.

We believe that these five characteristics are vital to bringing about successful reconciliation in communities afflicted by violent conflict and repression. As the Afghan conflict evolves—and someday comes to an end—it is the team's sincere hope that these examples will prove helpful to policymakers, donors, and local leaders as they set about the critical task ahead.

Appendix: Additional Programs of Interest

While the three following cases were subjects of serious research by our team, there was ultimately insufficient information and evidence uncovered to include them in the primary section of the report. Each confronts profoundly intricate issues such as land reform, militant reintegration, and community dialogue—all of which are critical to the future success and stability of Afghanistan. The team's research did not allow us to conclude with confidence that these were best practices to highlight. Nonetheless, the programs constitute intriguing cases in reconciliation practice that may well be worth pursing in the Afghan context, and the team encourages the readers of this report to solicit further research into and application of the models that they provide.

Land Reform Commission
Case: Liberia

Background

From 1989 to 2003, Liberia had two civil wars that spanned 14 years, both of which involved rebel groups fighting the government to seize control and listed the primary cause of the war as governmental greed and corruption.[92] Additionally, land rights, tenure, access, and natural resource rights are considered underlying issues which helped fuel the conflict. For instance, in 2003 it was estimated that nearly 90 percent of all civil court cases involved land rights disputes and that 63 percent of violent conflict was rooted in land rights issues.[93] The Liberian Land Authority (LLA) was created, which oversees land management, settles disputes, and ensures that land rights are protected for all citizens. Two years later the Liberian government passed the Land Rights Act, guaranteeing land rights protections for all.

Program Description

In 2009, The United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) created the Land Commission (LC) which helped develop the Land Rights Act in Liberia.[94] The LC worked to define private, customary, government, and public land, as well as recognize, protect, and ensure such rights—something that nearly 80 percent of Liberians had previously lacked. The LC found success in Liberia due to the way they implemented and applied their program.[95] With a focus on including all stakeholders, both public and private, they were able to identify areas needing reform via a national

consultation, leading to a more effective solution. They then divided the land policy into five distinct areas: land rights, land administration, land use, land dispute management, and gender and land. By developing multiple specialized policies regarding the five distinct areas, they were better able to address community needs than if they had pursued one national policy. USAID and the LC collaborated and advised on the 2013 Land Rights Policy, which acted as the basis for the subsequent Land Rights Act. Following the approval of the Land Rights Policy, Liberia developed a single land governance institution, the Liberian Land Authority (LLA), which works to manage Liberia's land resources and settle disputes and confusion that may arise.[96]

Evidence of Success

Liberia has remained relatively stable since the development of the LC and has not reengaged in conflict over land rights. Moreover, the Open Society Initiative for West Africa, Landesa Rural Development Institute, and the Tenure Facility have all expressed their support for the Land Rights Act and LLA, citing not only the necessity to protect land rights in the region, but also its importance in protecting women's rights.[97] Liberia's Civil Society Group affirmed that

> "by this passage of the bill, distinguished members of the 54th Legislature, you have led us to begin a march in Liberia around land reform which inaugurates an opportunity to correct over a century and half old injustice in our land tenure system—a system which give land rights and ownership by title to a small percentage of our citizens, but denied over 80 percent of the population the same right to own and have title for their ancestral lands-leaving them only with the right to access and use of their land."[98]

Although new, the Land Rights Act and LLA have proven successful at calming tensions within the region, with a national survey showing that 49.7 percent of citizens perceive progress in their country's reconciliation efforts.[99]

Applicability to Afghanistan

In Afghanistan, land rights are subject to overlapping and inconsistent legal systems and continue to contribute to the national instability in Afghanistan.[100] Land management is poor, resulting in slow economic growth. Competition for land is increasing rapidly, with urbanization, displacement, and resettlement driving the demand. Prior to the major conflicts in the region, land rights disputes were resolved at a community level, but following the onset of conflicts, community-based avenues for reconciliation have become increasingly unstable.

Only about 20 percent of Afghanistan's land is titled accurately, and there is little to no faith in the government systems since most documentation was deliberately destroyed, lost, or falsified.[101] Moreover, due to the Afghan government's use of statutory law to sell and lease lands, customary claims to those lands have been undermined, leading to more tension between the government and its citizens.[102] These factors, coinciding with conflicting civil, Sharia, and state laws, have exacerbated instability and tensions within the nation.[103]

Liberia was selected from the many countries that have implemented land reform as an example for Afghanistan due to similarities with overlapping laws and existing resentment and mistrust of the government. In Afghanistan, similar programs like USAID's Land Reform in Afghanistan Group (LARA) have worked to improve land rights and set the framework for what could be Afghanistan's version of the Land Rights Act. Although Afghanistan already had an independent land commission, albeit a challenged one, they would likely benefit from the implementation of Liberia's model. Importantly, adopting a community-based approach, inclusive national consultations, and a division of the land authority into distinct commissions each with a clear goal could allow Afghanistan to address some of the underlying causes of the conflict. The team believes land reform and a strong revitalized land reform commission or agency should be seriously explored as part of a peace consolidation process.

Militant Reintegration
Case: Tajikistan

Background

In Afghanistan, peace will bring many new challenges. Between 60,000 and 150,000 Taliban and other militants, as well as many others in the official government and private enterprise security sector, will need to be transitioned into new social and economic roles, if they are to resist temptations to rejoin the fight in which they have spent many years and on which they have relied for security and sustenance.[104]

Tajikistan's militant reintegration appears to serve as a useful example. Its civil war broke out along ideological, political, and religious cleavages, resulting in the deadliest conflict yet to occur in the former Soviet Union. The broadly secularist regime was opposed by a diverse set of militias, representing ethnic and Islamist entities. A successful peace and reconciliation process seemed unlikely—challenged by wide-spread poverty,

powerful spoilers, insurgent-friendly sanctuaries in Afghanistan, and the absence of national identity—yet peace has held.

Program Description

Notably, reintegration of combatants was far from conventional. Mid-level units were absorbed into the existing regime's military without separating former militants, allowing for continuity of command and building trust between formerly warring parties. Disarmament was nominally required, but sparsely enforced with the regime's willingness to overlook these imperfections establishing further trust. Partially born of the post-Soviet state's corruption, commanders were incentivized to participate in government via the generous provisions of former state properties. The clear economic benefits of participation in the regime incentivized insurgents to support and fight for its cohesion, if not its liberal function. Moreover, the emphasis of reintegration above disarmament and demobilization allowed for almost complete reabsorption of combatants into local security roles and law enforcement positions, even amidst persistent unrest and poverty. These positions leveraged existing social ties and familial networks, both more understandable to and understanding of the context individual combatants exist in.[105]

Evidence of Success

Gun violence has remained remarkably low since 2000, and the state, though corrupt and authoritarian, is reasonably stable. Throughout the duration of its program, Tajikistan integrated almost 5,000 former militants into local law enforcement and security roles.

Applicability to Afghanistan

These efforts occurred after a decades-long, sectarian conflict and offer stark contrasts to the familiar canon of reintegration programs. The successes of this program provide realistic objectives for Afghanistan and do not presume the civil structures and external funding sources present in other successful militant reintegration programs. The fact that this relative success took place right next to Afghanistan also suggests that it may be more adaptable to the Afghan context than others where the cultural and historical differences are much greater. Past attempts at Afghan reintegration have struggled in the absence of broad security reforms and meaningful protection for ex-combatants, yet the successes of other cases of reintegration of militants demonstrate the possibility of a successful

process that can be essential to sustainable peace. The authors believe that an in-depth study of the Tajik experience could well be useful for forging successful reintegration of Taliban forces in the context of a peace agreement.

Fambul Tok
Case: Sierra Leone

Background

The civil war in Sierra Leone began in 1991 as the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) began sweeping inland through the country. Their voluntary and forced recruitment of young adults and children swiftly increased their numbers. When the conflict came to an end in 2002, Sierra Leone implemented Truth and Reconciliation Commissions nationwide in an attempt to foster reconciliation, but the commission lacked capacity to address the sum of all the conflict's atrocities. Rural Sierra Leoneans in particular were excluded, leaving many unable to reconcile with their past. To address this gap, the organization Fambul Tok ("Family Talk" in Krio) was created in 2007 to address wartime grievances and facilitate local-level reconciliation in rural communities. It currently operates in five of 13 districts in Sierra Leone.

Program Description

Fambul Tok built upon pre-existing practices in order to create a space for communities' work toward reconciliation. This begins with a "district consultation," wherein workers recruit a diverse and representative group of leaders—such as chiefs, women, religious figures, youth, war victims, and ex-militants—to discuss the locality's reconciliation needs and goals for the program. Following this session, a "District Executive Committee" is selected from volunteers to identify two respected and qualified individuals (one male and one female) in each community to receive extensive training. They, in turn, identify gender-balanced outreach teams and reconciliation committees within their village. The program existed as an outline for communities and aided local leaders in creating ceremonies, like bonfires, for their communities, to offer reconciliation on a personal level. The goal was to create community driven and replicable models for locals to implement, reconcile, and teach what they have learned.

Evidence of Success

Fambul Tok has seen success in multiple ways. First, it was able to actively engage everyday Sierra Leoneans as participants in the process of justice and peacebuilding. While Truth and Reconciliation Commissions were

effective at establishing a background for what occurred during the war, the broadcast failed to reach the villagers most impacted by the war due to the process' location in Freetown, which is far from many local communities.[106] Thus, involving these people in any process and receiving their full involvement was a significant achievement. Second, the program was able to help prevent future conflicts from arising by generating local conflict-resolution skills and establishing sustainable practices to foster future growth. By leaning on existing practices, the people felt they had a hand in the process and, as such, were invested in maintaining the peace.[107] Lastly, Fambul Tok was able to truly transform communities. As participant Sahr Ngaoa, chief of the Kono district states,

> "After the war, plenty of people are afraid to return to their homes for fear of revenge. Now that Fambul Tok is creating the platform for victims, witnesses and perpetrators to mediate reconciliation for peaceful co-existence, we have no alternative but to welcome Fambul Tok. I am sure community reconciliation will help us fight poverty."[108]

By tapping into the existing resources of a community, Fambul Tok was able to aid these communities in repairing what was lost during the war. In some communities, schools and bridges have been rebuilt; in others, they have created community farms, all in an effort to maintain sustainable peace.[109]

Applicability to Afghanistan

Fambul Tok offers some insight and possible ideas for the Afghanistan peace process. Because the program focused on the community level, it could help Afghan communities heal where they need it the most. Additionally, Fambul Tok and Catalyst for Peace have been in talks with the Institute for State Effectiveness in Afghanistan about the success of the program and how it may fit into an Afghan context, such as integration with the already-existing Citizens Charter. The Citizens Charter is a commitment made by the Afghan government to its citizens to fund Community Development Councils tailored to their specific needs.[110] The Community Development Councils are very similar to the community bonfires held in Sierra Leone, and both programs have seen similar success. The Citizens Charter might be able to incorporate lessons from the Fambul Tok program, such as its intense focus on community chosen goals and elective trainings, to grow its success as the peace process continues. As of now, it is unclear if the Citizens Charter would continue after a peace settlement, but the authors believe that community-

based programs will remain essential for reconciliation and for sustaining peace. Fambul Tok offers a compelling model from which to learn.

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