

BACK TO OUR FUTURE:

A Handbook for Post-War Recovery

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Foreword

It would be an understatement to say there is a great need for post-conflict models of intervention. The extent of violent conflict in our world, and its impact, is unfathomable. As we write, new (and old) conflicts break out across the globe. In a spirit of both humility and possibility, we offer this handbook as a model that can be developed and extended elsewhere in the world.

We are honoured and proud to have been involved in the exciting work in Croatia that is described in these pages. Since 1996 hundreds of people have found this work of profound value to them personally and it has gone on to influence their capacity to participate and lead the reconstruction of their local communities, and indeed the country, which was devastated by war. While the work goes on, we realise that it is essential to pass on our model and the practices that have been a contribution to the region, so the work can expand and develop, and be of further use in Croatia, the wider Balkan region and in dealing with post-conflict issues and violence prevention in Europe, Central Asia and other regions of our world.

The handbook is a joint project of Udruga Mi in Croatia, and CFOR Force for Change in the UK. It is written as part of our current programme supported by EIDHR European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights and UNHCR UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

The authors are Nives Ivelja , Slobodan Škopelja and Milan Bijelic from Udruga Mi, Arlene Audergon and Jean-Claude Audergon from CFOR and Lane Arye. We have written as a team, meeting, debating, working on different sections independently and in sub-teams. We are grateful to the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights for the current support of our work in Croatia, and their support for writing this handbook.



Part One: Overview, Purpose and Model

I. Conflict Facilitation and Community Development after War: Why and How?

We are pleased to write about our experiences in Croatia, 1996-2002, and 2006- 2010 (current), as a model that we believe will be useful more widely in the region, and in other post-conflict societies dealing with conflict resolution, community building, economic recovery and violence prevention.

Why

We write about this model for post-conflict societies because of our consistent experiences over 15 years witnessing the potential among individuals and communities to transform violent conflict, and to build the community relationships and the sense of meaning and responsibility needed to impact community development, and to prevent future rounds of violence.

Community relationships past and future

Following violent conflicts communities want and need to return to real, normal life as soon as possible. The primary focus is usually to protect lives, then to repair houses and infrastructure, and then the economy.

Until now the process of restoring community relationships in society has not been considered central. It is largely left to happen of its own accord through rebuilding the administrative and political structures. There are of course essential humanitarian efforts from religious organisations, local authorities, the international community and civil society. But, the essential need to recover relationships and build relationship networks within society has not been given the attention it needs.

To focus on community relationships, you need to find means of dealing with community-wide trauma, strong emotion, polarised conflict and tensions. Focusing on community relationships is not only for the purpose of easing these tensions, but also for the purpose of accessing the capacity, the potential wisdom within individuals, organisations and communities, to grapple with blocks to development and to build relationships and discover new directions. To focus on community relationships means focusing on relationships across

sectors, for example working with tensions between NGOs and local authorities. It also means supporting the initiatives and the team - work needed to build creative partnerships, and make use of technical support to bring dreams and projects to life.

Relational infrastructure – a sea change

The model we are presenting is part of a sea change that is underway and terribly needed. One could say that building an emotional or relational infrastructure is key to all aspects of post-conflict recovery, community development and violence prevention. Without it, communities suffer from emotional and economic depression, young people leaving their communities, lack of initiative and hopelessness. When there are facilitated interactions that address and transform heated issues, we have seen that there is a profound level of hope, possibility, energy, creativity and leadership released into the community.

Violence prevention

Everyone wants to go forward after war, with hopes of a better life for their children and future generations. But, if community-wide trauma and unresolved issues of accountability are not addressed in society, these emotions not only block community development, but become the fuel for future violence. The collective emotions around unresolved trauma and issues of accountability can be tragically and easily manipulated into large-scale violent conflict, with all the shock, devastation and trauma to our lives and future. So, the cycle goes forward.

For the sake of future generations, it is essential that in post-conflict situations, we develop ways of grappling with issues of trauma, accountability, and the tragedy of war, in order to prevent future rounds of violence.

Need for models for post-conflict communities

We have seen that given the opportunity, many people become moved to take initiative, even those who had thought they were completely burnt out. People of all ages care deeply for their communities and are eager to learn how to perceive and facilitate their interactions so as to not fall into hopelessness or repeat polarised conflict, and to make it possible to work together to resolve and transform the past. In this way, past experiences are no longer fuel for future tensions, but rather the invaluable experience needed to facilitate difficult interactions, and to take initiative and leadership to build a different future.

It's a far-reaching idea that people from different sectors of society and from different sides of a conflict can gather together to grapple with how they will deal with the aftermath of violence, and build the future - that they can discover how conflict is perpetuated, recognise how they take part, and how they can make a difference. Participants form deep and long-lasting relationships needed for the long-term work of rebuilding communities and creating a world for their children.

We hope this handbook contributes to the profound need for effective models to interrupt cycles of violence, to recognising the extraordinary resources within people, and the hope and practical capacity within post-conflict regions to build thriving societies.

How

This manual is a collection of our expertise, learning from lived events, techniques, theory and practice. We provide principles, approaches and methods attested in practice. The main theme throughout is that the psycho-social aspects of community reconstruction are central to the success of economic, social and political development of society. This manual adds to instructions and steps in community actions in crisis and following violent conflict. It focuses on the importance of those aspects of community development, which may be less visible and all too often neglected, but that are inevitable and central for the creation of new relationships between people and groups who share a geographical area and part of their identity.

1996-2002

From just after the war ended in Croatia in 1996, and until 2002, the programmes involved facilitated 4-day residential forums two times a year, additional training days, regional meetings, and a journal. Participants were from all sides of war and different sectors of community. The forums were residential, each with 50-90 participants from war-affected areas. The original forum in 1996 was organised by Tanja Radocaj and Mirela Miharija, two psychologists from Croatia, and sponsored by IRC. It also included participants from Bosnia. The following forums were coordinated by Udruga Mi, led by Tanja, then Nives Ivelja and team. Forums were facilitated by Arlene Audergon and Lane Arye. Since 1998, these programmes were continually supported by UNHCR. They were also funded by the Open Society Institute, Office of Transition Initiatives, the Threshold Foundation, OSCE, Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the Norwegian, Belgian, Dutch, and British embassies.

2006- Current (2010)

Since 2006, our programmes have focused on linking economic recovery and community development with working with blocks to community development, and tensions in community, in the areas most impacted by war, 'Areas of Special State Concern'. In the large forums, we focus on regional issues and individual and community projects, as well as post-conflict polarisations that continue to block development. During this stage, we have directly given people technical and/or economic support for local projects. We have continued to be actively supported by the UNHCR, funded by the Dutch, Belgium, and Norwegian embassies. Our current programme since 2009 involves large forums for participants from the regions of special state concern, and local panels and discussions, also supported by

the UNHCR and funded through the EIDHR European Institute for Democracy and Human Rights. A separate, but complementary programme is our three-modular leadership training – also supported by UNHCR, the Millenium fund, and the Spanish embassy.

Who participates?

Participants of the large forums, regional panel discussions, and who were involved with project and economic development in their regions are from a wide range of backgrounds and from different sectors of society. They are from local NGOs in civil society, international organisations, and from government and local authorities. There is a wide range of people involved, essential for vital and creative interactions. There are people involved with local grassroots projects like making and selling honey, or attracting tourists to visit their region. There are mayors, managers of social services, people involved with legal advocacy, peace initiatives, education, counselling, advocacy of ethnic/ national minority groups, women's groups, youth groups, elderly and disabled. Some are involved with policy at high levels within international organisations. Others are involved with grassroots services and initiatives. It is also important to emphasise that the participants have diverse war experiences, and have been on opposite sides of the war. They are Croat, Serb, Muslim, and from mixed and other ethnic-national backgrounds, such as Hungarian and Roma.

People involved in complex processes of reconstruction in their communities hold a large burden because of their dual role. They are beneficiaries and service providers at the same time. Just at this most difficult time when the community is weakened and in turmoil due to stress, loss and trauma, they are called to assume responsibility to work with this situation. The extreme nature of the situation, and the great need in community can raise the expectations of ordinary people for services to help them. The wish to help is compounded by the level of need that may feel impossible to fill, and the long and arduous process over months, years and decades. On the other hand, the extent of need draws out reserves and resources in people, encouraging the community to find creative solutions.

Local organisation

The strength of the local coordinating organisation is one key to the success of our model. The principle underlying our model is that it is the local people, within communities and within the country who hold the resources and direction to rebuild relationships and reconstruct their communities. Our model involves bringing people together to facilitate interactions to access this potential. In this model the role of the local organisation is paramount, to build professional relationships, contact with funders, with local government and international organisations, and especially for contact with people in local communities, and hosting events, and holding the trust and interest of the local communities.

The leader and team of the coordinating organisation need professional expertise and years of experience in community development, essential for outreach and to facilitate regional

meetings, to offer capacity building and technical support, to offer support and evaluate local projects in a way that promotes local initiative, and to invite people to and coordinate the large events. They also must be in good contact with the facilitators of the large forums.

Facilitation methods

While proposing a model for post-conflict zones that emphasises community relationships, it is important to underscore that coming together to work with the polarisations and tensions in community is no simple matter. It would be professionally irresponsible to do such forums without facilitation methods and special skills that work carefully with the volatile emotions and conflicts that arise, in a way that supports awareness and does not simply set off repeating conflict or trauma.

Our large forums are led by expert facilitators using methods of Process Oriented Psychology a unique framework, developed by Dr. Arnold Mindell, for facilitating dialogue in organisations and communities dealing with conflict and high tension, including when there is historical and current conflict and trauma.

The methods are unique in their capacity to access the inherent wisdom, direction and creativity within community, in even the most difficult situations. Facilitators must also have experience and knowledge concerning the particular political and social dynamics of the region.

What the large forums are like

Whereas typical conferences involve presentations and short discussions, but tend to avoid actual interactions concerning heated themes and polarised positions, the facilitated forums we will describe in this model have a very different character.

Highly interactive, the forums go well beyond talking 'about' issues. Problems of deep concern to people in their communities are brought forward in direct interactions among the group participants. It becomes clear that the problems are not only 'out there' among those who refuse to get along, but rather here in the room among the participants. This creates the opportunity to work on the issues they meet in the field, to recognise how one is part of the problem, and to find pathways to be part of the solution. Out of polarised positions and community-wide trauma emerge transformations at a personal, relational and collective level. The depth of experiences that are shared have an impact on people's attitudes and their capacity to deal with community challenges and conflict. Long-lasting relationships are formed, as well as projects impacting the growth of communities.

Facing the past AND facing the future

Our model is based on the recognition that past and future are entangled. It is essential to face forward, and work towards building the future. In order to move forward, we need to also facilitate the 'past' that is structuring the present dynamics.

People everywhere naturally want to avoid touching on the most central issues that are hot and potentially volatile. This is in part due to the wish to protect oneself and the community from repeating hurts. It is also natural, however, to unwittingly fall into the polarised conflicts that you are trying to avoid. One of the reasons people tend to either avoid conflict or fall into it is that, until now, there have been few models for facilitated social dialogue. We need models that foster the individual and collective awareness that is needed in order for people to be less easily polarised and manipulated and to find creative resolutions to complex issues.

This handbook reflects upon and summarises some of the basic elements of our model in Croatia, past and current, with the purpose of shaping future steps in Croatia, in the wider Balkan region, and within other post-conflict zones in Europe, Central Asia, and internationally.

Post-Conflict, What now?

What happens after violent conflict? What is needed to move forward? The answers are political, economic, social, emotional, psychological and spiritual. Our capacity to understand what happens after conflict, and to determine what is needed to facilitate recovery can impact not only many thousands of people's lives in the immediate years following a violent conflict. Answers to these questions will also make the difference as to whether or not we can prevent new cycles of violence in the following generations.

After violent conflict, there may be an immediate need to protect communities from outbreaks of violence, whether from groups who identify as not having power, or from groups in power trying to enforce control. After violent conflict, local and national governments are in turmoil. There is political vying for power throughout all levels of society. Outside interventions may or may not arrive, or be sufficiently coordinated, offering everything from vital humanitarian, financial, technical and psychosocial assistance to exploitation.

Housing, heating in the winter and basic subsistence are needed. The economy is struggling if not collapsed. Fields may be mined, creating danger, and making farms unusable. Those who have been directly impacted by war, including war veterans, continue to relive it in traumatic memories. Old people need care. Young people face an insecure future. Many leave and aging populations remain. There are persisting polarisations and tensions between ethnic-

national groups. Refugees and displaced people try to survive and build a new life or deal with whether they can or want to return.

There are needs for legal advocacy, education, social services and economic development. People ask themselves how can they possibly live together again. Many people suffer from the feeling they could not do more to protect their families and communities. They suffer from loss and trauma, and no time to grieve, because of needing to go forward to rebuild. The outrage and grief is immense -- for those who died or disappeared, and for the loss of home and the lost years.

Need for a 'Relational Infrastructure'

To even begin to address any or all of these issues, there needs to be initiative, communication and cooperation among many different people, across all sectors of society. Cooperation around issues of such magnitude, and around such instability and complexity of interacting factors would be terribly difficult under even the best circumstances. With the added problems of shock, trauma, and persisting polarisations, it is easy for people to become hopeless.

With good will and with even minimal resources, many exciting initiatives arise within civil society, and within local authorities and government, too. Tenacity and good-heartedness in the midst of the most difficult situations is extraordinary. Yet, persisting political tensions and /or ethnic-national tensions, can easily block the success of these activities. People often feel that their initiatives are not quite taken seriously, leaving individuals and organisations to feel unsupported, isolated from each other, competing for funds and burnt out.

After violent conflict, at this time of greatest need, support from the international community may be essential. It is often delayed or missing, or it arrives without sufficient relationship to and recognition of the talents and resources of the local community. Sometimes money may pour in, but may disappear due to lack of cooperation and communication. This can breed cynicism both inside and outside the country and further delay the help needed.

Just as it is clear that society needs an infrastructure such as roads and telecommunications to re-build its future, society therefore needs a process of building the 'relational infrastructure' necessary to be able to deal with the realities of post-conflict violence, and to access the direction, wisdom and resources within community to create the future.

Interactions and communication are needed across organisations, across professions, across sectors – civil society, local authorities and international organisations - and across ethnic-national divisions, or groups that have been in conflict. Facilitated interactions are needed that can help people deal with tensions and 'hot spots' they encounter in their work, and with one another.

Need for Accountability

The bakery

After conflict, individuals, communities and whole societies are faced with unresolved questions of accountability. As a man said it in our first forum in 1996, “How am I supposed to kiss and say good morning in the bakery, knowing that every man of a certain age may have been a sniper shooting at me? I need someone to stand opposite me and talk about what happened.”

It is essential to deal with matters of accountability so that society can move forward. Although nothing can ever bring back lost lives, and nothing will fully repair the devastation to community relationships, it is essential and it is possible to find some level of closure, to be able to move forward.

Historically, processes of accountability have been sorely absent. Open issues of accountability then remain like open wounds, generation to generation.

We use the word ‘accountability’ to refer to a range of processes, any or all of which may be needed, to help society recover and move forward after conflict. These may be immediately post-conflict, or may occur years and decades after.

Criminal accountability, Truth commissions and Lustration

One form of accountability is criminal accountability for war crimes. After the violence in the 1990’s in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, International Tribunals were established so that those most responsible could be held accountable. Cases may also be tried within the country in criminal courts, but there are various reasons why this can be difficult. One purpose of International Tribunals is to prevent ‘impunity’, that someone can get away with war crimes, because they are in a position of power, or protected by those in power, in their country.

Criminal accountability, both in national trials and international trials is based on the idea that as those most responsible are held accountable, society will be freed from generalised blaming of the whole ethnic-national group.

Truth Commissions are an important method of accountability and have taken place in many post-conflict zones, most notably in South Africa. Truth commissions focus on the vital need for society to fill in the missing information, to tell and hear the story, to face the past to move forward. In South Africa, the possibility of receiving amnesty for coming forward supported the vital need for the story to be told, and for healing to happen.

Lustration has been used in post-Soviet societies as a method of facing the past and removing from power those associated with the abuse and tyranny of the former regime. It is an

alternate method to either criminal prosecution or a truth and reconciliation process. It has had variations in different countries, in respect to who initiates the process, how the lustrated individual is treated, how it is assessed who qualifies for lustration in a country where abuses were systemic, and whether there is public access to files.

Accountability in community forums

There is a need for the broader community and society to engage in processes of accountability, too - to find a means, or a forum for grappling at a personal, relational, and community level, around unresolved and open questions of accountability.

There is much we might say about this, but we want to highlight two points here:

1. Backlash and repeating cycles of conflict:

If accountability is only dealt with at the level of International Tribunals, there is often backlash, until issues have been worked with more thoroughly throughout society, including all points of view and war experiences into the mix. One example of this backlash was when Croats accused of war crimes were brought to the Tribunal in The Hague; mass demonstrations broke out, because they were seen by large portions of the population as war heroes not criminals.

2. Identification with innocence and hopelessness:

Tribunals are essential for society to hold accountable those most responsible for war crimes. This can help free society from a general process of making one another guilty, so that society can move forward. We learned through interactions at our forums that people needed to face one another about issues of accountability for what has happened to their lives. They also needed to grapple with how this could have happened, what their part was, and how their actions or inactions had contributed to an atmosphere in which those crimes were committed. They found it insufficient to just remain identified with simple innocence. Ignoring the larger questions of social responsibility makes people feel passive and hopeless about the future. Opportunities are needed for people throughout society to grapple with their personal part and personal responsibility in collective events, in order to feel a part of this world, and able to contribute to a different future.

Need to Address Collective Dynamics of Trauma

Destruction of war brings on wide-scale trauma at the personal and social levels, which compounds all the difficulties faced during reconstruction.

Trauma: a social dynamic, not just a mental health issue

Trauma needs to be understood as a collective dynamic not only as a mental health issue, so community-wide distress can be addressed, and the community can go forward.

An individual who has suffered trauma experiences one part of themselves moving forward to function, survive and move on, and another part that cannot, and remains locked in the experience which repeats in nightmares, in flashbacks, and symptoms.

As life moves on and the need to survive, a person may identify with moving on, unable to relate to the shock and pain suffered. It feels as if there is no time to stop and perceive, respond and in some way include this experience into one's life. Part of healing for an individual is to recognise the importance of moving on, and for the story to be told, and to be heard, witnessed, and somehow included in one's life and in one's community.

When trauma is seen as only a mental health issue of individuals, it exacerbates the trauma. It further isolates the individual, leaving their traumatic experience out of the context and narrative of the society, our collective story. The individual's trauma needs to be witnessed and included in the community, in our collective story, so that the individual is freed to feel part of society again, and for society to move forward whole.

Collective dynamics of trauma

While there is increasing recognition that violent conflict traumatizes whole communities, and that trauma is both a response to violence and a vehicle for further violence, there is a profound need for a wider understanding of the collective dynamics of trauma and corresponding methods of working in a community.

The dynamics of trauma can be understood with 'systems' thinking. The same dynamics occur at different levels. Individuals, particular groups or whole regions can be cut off due to the dynamics of trauma. Just as one part of the individual goes forward, and the other part remains locked in the experience, parts of society move forward, economically and emotionally – while those parts of society most affected by the war, remain hurt, blocked or hopeless.

Or one part of society with more privilege will go forward, and say that is surely an old story – and those who suffered may still be inside the story, trying to tell it again, but with no one interested. Or the rest of the world moves on, and forgets the war that was last month's news.

Models are needed that address community-wide trauma, and the collective dynamics of trauma, in order for us to realise how 'your' story is 'my' story and our shared story, that we might witness history and move forward whole.

Trauma and violence prevention

It is the nature of individual trauma that it repeats in nightmares and flashbacks and other symptoms. It is the nature of collective trauma that it is repeated in cycles of violence, the traumatic memory used like fuel.

The traumas from our personal and family history, combined with lack of any processes of accountability for past conflicts can be intentionally manipulated into new rounds of violent conflict, even generations later.

To prevent future violent conflict, it is essential that we recognise that dynamics of collective trauma needs attention from all of us.

Need for Outlook – It is Possible to Come Through

In post-conflict situations, perhaps one of the greatest needs of all is a sense of outlook, a sense that it is possible to come through. Outlook is needed for individuals, communities, the country and the international community.

To support the needed work within post-conflict regions, it is vital to recognise that people who have been through the most difficult times, devastation and suffering and are very much in need of support, also have within themselves an uncanny resource, and sense of possibility and outlook. It is often felt as a sense of love and eldership, expressed in constant hard work, out of devotion to their communities.

Just as areas that have been hit hardest by war need special support and intervention, it is crucial to recognise the innate resources within the region, and the contribution the region can also make to the larger society.

As an example, in Croatia, the 'Areas of Special State Concern' are in need of special assistance, because they have been the most impacted by war. At the same time, society needs to see the vital work they are doing and the transformations they are going through, which are contributions to the whole country and region.

To promote the outlook necessary for emotional and economic recovery and future violence prevention, it is crucial that the 'Areas of Special State concern' are not seen by the broader society as only a 'problem' holding others back. Learning about the experiences people have had in these regions, their survival and their transformation, is vital for the future of all of us. Their reflections and lessons learned are contributions to the larger society.

There is a potential for creativity inherent to complex systems in upheaval. In post-conflict zones, in the midst of tragic upheaval and multiple interacting factors blocking the development of society, it is useful to recognise that individuals and whole communities can not only transform their most difficult experiences, but can discover resources they don't even know they have.

It would be foolish to presume this kind of creativity, because in the midst of upheaval it is easy for the devastation and destruction to cycle. The creativity cannot be presumed, but needs to be invited, perceived, and respected where it arises.

Need for support of leaders, elders, and youth

Support is needed for those who care for the whole of their community and are making a difference.

There is need for technical support and guidance for people taking initiative in their communities. There is also need for facilitation training for people who are leaders in community, interested in making a difference – to help them to facilitate the polarised fields they encounter, without falling into the polarisations themselves.

We use the word ‘elder’ at times to refer not to age, but to that part of oneself that has wisdom and the best interests of everyone in the community at heart. Elders need respect, acknowledgement and invitation to take part in community dialogue.

And young people are our future. They need not only programmes to support them, but also encouragement to care for their communities, and to realise the huge difference they make and can make to the future of their communities, country and region.

II. The Model

In this section we list some of the underlying premises of our work, and factors that lead to its effectiveness, as well as the organisational principles that guide us.

Premises of our work

Our premise is that people working and living in the field with the challenges of conflict resolution and community development need opportunities to meet among themselves about the issues they encounter in their communities, to find direction and pathways forward. For this to be effective and not inflammatory, special means and methods are needed that do not try to ignore conflict, but rather can go carefully to the most difficult dynamics and facilitate the interactions, and initiative within community.

Resolution and pathways to reconstruction lie within the community

Our model is based on the idea that resolution, direction, initiative and pathways forward can be found within the community. All of our contacts within local communities are based on respect and support for local initiatives. Our forums and regional meetings support the inherent capacity for conflict transformation and creative community development within community, when all viewpoints and emotions are supported to interact with facilitation.

Working with community issues as they appear in momentary interactions

People can only meet the challenges in their communities, as far as they have been able to process the issues themselves. In forums, after collecting the issues that people say are of most concern to them in their communities, we work directly with these themes as they are relevant to the group, and as they appear in momentary interactions. Learning and changes in attitude are actual, emotional, transformational, and hence transferable to the participants' communities.

Awareness is the key ingredient to transforming conflict

Awareness stops the spiral of conflict. Increasing our awareness of the individual and collective dynamics of conflict allows us to not just be swallowed up into polarisations. This includes recognising how we are part of the conflict, how the other is us, and how we as individuals or groups escalate or deescalate conflict. When we gain awareness of how we contribute to and co-create locked polarisations, we open the door to conflict resolution.

Facilitating awareness and communication at 'hot spots' leads to transformation

Even the thought that one could have a dialogue about community conflict and tensions brings up what we call 'hot spots'. These are points of sensitivity, where one tends to back away for fear of setting off conflict or touching on too much pain, or one tends to fall into an escalation. Ignoring 'hot spots' leads to cycling of conflict and volatility. Our methods work carefully with the 'hot spots' of conflicts, whether in negotiations or in community interactions in forums, so these can become points of transformation, rather than points of cycling conflict and repeating trauma. Specific facilitation skills are required for recognising and working carefully with these spots, as potential doorways to transforming conflict.

The link between emotional and economic recovery

Emotional and economic recovery in post-conflict zones are inextricably linked. Combine constant hard work in post-conflict society with persisting polarisations and community wide trauma, and it is easy to understand people's hopelessness and burnout. When the persisting polarisations and trauma are not addressed, they cycle – leading to a sense of hopelessness. This 'burnout' links to economic stagnation and depression, which in turn links to further hopelessness.

Conversely, when people are able to work together with the conflicts and tensions they suffer from, they experience a profound relief and sense of possibility. Forum interactions lead to a new sense of relationship and community, and the resulting hope and resourcefulness among people working together. Such relationships become the fabric of community, needed to create networks for project development, and to give a sense of meaning and purpose.

Factors contributing to the effectiveness of the programme

The implementing organisation needs a strong sense of community and contact with many organisations throughout the region or country.

In our work, Udruga Mi has consistently sustained contact and relationships with people in the field, supporting regional dialogue, and working directly with people on their projects, managing economic support and technical assistance. Their work, reaching out to diverse groups has been essential for the success of our model.

The organisational structure of Udruga Mi, as an independent association of citizens, has contributed to its effectiveness. By way of its various programmes, it has strong visibility throughout the country. Another contributing factor may be its relative geographic distance to more war-affected areas. Udruga Mi is located in Split, which was not in the centre of the conflict zone. In some ways this makes it more possible to be trusted on all sides of the issues.

A facilitation method is needed that can work with and transform volatile emotions

An important parameter of our model is the unique approach of ‘worldwork’, the application of Process Oriented Psychology to facilitating conflict resolution and forum facilitation. In our forums, we mention the method only briefly, as our focus is on facilitating the issues and dynamics in the group. For our purposes here it is important to underscore the importance of our approach. It is rare to find methods of conflict resolution with the capacity to include and transform emotions around volatile issues and tensions, respecting all parts of the group, and focusing on practical application. It is rare to find methods of psychology that address community polarisations and community interactions for post-conflict recovery. The comprehensive theoretical and practical framework developed by Arnold Mindell and colleagues, is at the seat of the model, and makes it successful. We also use other methods where they are useful, such as ‘World café’, or ‘Open Space Technology’.

Dedication and commitment of the facilitators is vital

Another important parameter contributing to the success of our model has been the personal feeling and dedication of our facilitators.

Lane Arye and Arlene Audergon came to facilitate the first forum in Osijek in 1996 and continued facilitating during the following years, until 2002. During these years, Jean-Claude Audergon also frequently consulted on the programme. In 2006, Arlene and Jean-Claude Audergon and Lane Arye facilitated as a team, and from 2008 – 2010 (current) Arlene and Jean- Claude are co-facilitators of the forums and leadership training.

The long-term involvement of these three facilitators has been essential to the success of our model. Their long-term involvement also reflects their care for the people and the region, the close relationships formed, and their commitment to understanding and facilitating the complex issues they are working with. Their work reflects the eldership needed in post-war recovery.

A forum requires diversity among its participants

The fact that participants in our forums are Serb, Croat, Muslim, and from mixed and other ethnic backgrounds, and with very diverse war and post-war experiences, means that the forums are microcosms of the larger field. As a result, by working on the dynamics within the forum, we are also able to work on the issues that challenge the country as a whole. In addition to ethnic – national diversity, there is also diversity in respect to gender, sexual orientation, age, health, disability, education, class, profession and more.

Long-term relationships are the fabric for networking and development in post-war country.

In our experience, it has been very valuable that many participants attended several forums, while each forum also had new participants. Those who have been to previous forums contribute to an atmosphere of knowing that it is possible to talk about and come through the most difficult times and impossible conflicts together. Because of their experiences transforming apparently intractable conflicts and gaining awareness about each other, seminar participants form lasting collegial relationships and deep friendships.

Cooperation among local and international organisations, donors and partners models the way.

Another important factor in our model has been the facilitation of communication and cooperation between organisations. This includes sharing ideas, capacities, and initiatives, as well as building trust between the implementing organisation, the local community, the facilitating team, and also international organisations, partners and donors.

Throughout our programme, we have had a sustained support from the UN High Commission for Refugees. At the beginning and ongoing, we have worked together on the project design and implementation, in a way that has been creative and fruitful.

Since 2006, Udruga Mi has been working in partnership with CFOR Force for Change, an NGO, based in London, co-founded by Jean-Claude and Arlene Audergon. CFOR's programmes focus on conflict transformation in post-war zones, thriving multicultural societies, community development, and facilitation training for leaders.

Programme activities have been financed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the governments of Britain, Norway, Belgium, Holland and Spain, as well as the Open Society Institute, Office of Transition Initiatives, the Threshold Foundation, OSCE, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe. The European Union's European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) has supported our current stage of the project, including the drafting of this manual.

The public needs to know about alternatives to violence – Writing and involving media

The public tends to feel hopeless or inflamed after war. There are few explicit patterns outlining that it is possible to address and transform the devastation.

It is therefore imperative that the public learns that there are alternatives underway that can make a difference.

We recognised that reflection and writing was needed about the profound interactions participants were having, and their meaning for post-conflict recovery and violence prevention.

As one step, participants wrote a 'newsletter' to share their insights and experiences with one another. The facilitators published several articles and chapter contributions about the dynamics encountered working with community-wide trauma, issues of accountability and conflict facilitation. Arlene also wrote a book called *The War Hotel: Psychological Dynamics in Violent Conflict*, which was also translated into Croatian and Russian. The Croatian translation was a support to further dialogue and media coverage. An event was sponsored by the UNHCR, with several dignitaries attending, using the book as an opportunity to promote needed dialogue. We also gave lectures in professional conferences, articles were written in the mainstream press, and panel discussions were held on television. There were also panel discussions and town meetings in local communities.

It was a challenge to write and speak publicly because of the highly personal nature of people's interactions and respect for their privacy. Writing and communicating with the public is a necessary part of contributing to an emerging 'worldview' that recognises that individual and community awareness can interrupt the cycles of violence and prevent war. In this sense, so-called 'psycho-social' interventions are central to all aspects of post-war recovery.

It is relevant to remember that during the polarisation of war, media is often not free and has been used as a tool to manipulate and polarise groups.

We believe that communicating with the public about the potential of conflict facilitation is paramount, and with the current culture of the internet, social networking, blogging and more, contact with the wider public can be supported.

Organisational Principles:

The principles we followed in this programme were:

- Local cooperation, consultation and team work among colleagues in Croatia, including with UNHCR and EU, and building networks, relationship and community
- Interactions and cooperation with the organisations and individuals who are beneficiaries of our programmes, from cities and towns directly affected by war, to ensure thorough understanding of their situation
- Team work between Udruga Mi, (as the local and coordinating NGO) and international facilitators of Process Oriented Psychology, and since 2006, between the associate and partner organisations Udruga Mi and CFOR Force for Change
- Willingness and commitment to work with the tensions and real difficulties in the field, and to choose methods and approaches that are able to deal with the volatility of the issues
- Respect for the host communities and participants of forums, the persons and organisations that carry the end responsibility for effecting change
- Outreach to invite diverse groups to the forums, representing different sectors, fields of work, and different national-ethnic groups and war experience
- Hospitality and efficiency in coordinating large residential forum events and regional events
- Thorough planning and facilitating of the forums, reporting, and consistent review and learning from the feedback and experience of previous forums
- Sensitivity to changes in society and flexibility in approach
- Commitment to inclusion of individuals and groups who may be marginalised or are at risk of exclusion in society

Stages of our model

The needs of different periods give rise to different stages. In our model, we had two stages:

Stage 1- Working with those who assist others in the field

This phase focused on the needs of those working with others in war affected areas. Those helping others are also traumatized and personally affected by the war or war related events. By supporting those providing assistance, the community is strengthened, both directly, and indirectly in the recovery process.

Characteristics of this stage were as follows:

- Inclusion of representatives from different groups, including different ethnic-national groups, minority and majority groups, and groups in conflict
- Inclusion of representatives from different regions, including areas that have been differently affected by the war
- Inclusion of different sectors (Local NGOs, international organisations, government and local authorities)
- Inclusion of people who are contributing to their communities in a variety of ways, and from a variety of fields: mayors; social service providers, education, legal aid, services for youth, elderly, people with disability, minority rights, human rights, issues facing war veterans, and more
- Large forums, (40- 90 people) held twice a year were augmented with intensive training for a group of 12 active professionals, regional meetings, a journal, mobilisation in the field, individual support to vulnerable participants, and mentoring for the professional organisational team within Udruga Mi

Stage 2- Work with targeted communities most devastated by war

Working more directly with the communities most affected by war emerged as a need, as some areas in particular had difficulties in finding energy for renewal and progress. Indirect interventions towards individual community members or organisations was not bringing the necessary shift in these communities. The selection of cities and municipalities to work with at the local level was made on the basis of visible difficulties in relations between polarised groups, the slow return of refugees and displaced persons and low socioeconomic recovery.¹

¹ UNHCR is a long-term partner and donor, and has been consistently present in all war-affect areas where local interventions are needed.

Support to these areas contributed, among other things, towards a balanced development in a country where a significant part of its territory was affected by the war and the rest was spared direct damage (although also sustaining high human and economic losses).

Characteristics of this stage were as follows:

- Community mobilisation for the implementation of concrete actions:
 - Identification of active stakeholders; encouraging active citizenship
 - Eliciting ideas and designing the projects
 - Implementation and project management, including financing and monitoring of the project
 - informing, educating and consulting, facilitation of cooperation of different local stakeholders
 - encourage self-assessment and strengthening capacity for representation, and public presentations of key stakeholders in the country, focusing on development projects, community relations and initiatives that lead to employment and economic recovery (tourism, agriculture, environmental protection, preservation of cultural heritage, etc.) and involving all sectors of the community, that take into account retaining and attracting of young people and the quality of coexistence.
- Psychosocial interventions:
 - The large Forum events (40-75 people)
 - Intensive one-day trainings for selected members of the community
 - The Regional round tables
 - Fostering communication within local communities
 - Local meetings and individual support to participants
 - Supporting relationships with other organisations and the international community.
 - Supervision and mentoring for those in leadership (formal and informal) positions
 - Mentoring the professional team
 - Leadership training programme (Three times three-day modules)



Part Two: The Forums

III. Facilitated Forums

What is a Forum?

Gathering people in order to discuss what is going on and what is the way forward, trying to pool resources and engage in community decision-making is an age-old custom in many cultures. Forums are mentioned in historical narratives in many cultures as a means for a community to reflect on itself, on its course of actions, on its present state, on its differences and conflicts, on finding a path forward, on communicating between factions and groups and individuals.

The forums we facilitate in Croatia are based on the methods of Worldwork. Worldwork is the application of Process Oriented Psychology, developed by Dr. Arnold Mindell, that works with large and small groups on conflict resolution and community building. The method is based on the idea that there is a potential for conflict resolution and community development when all voices and points of view are supported to interact, including those that are usually seen as marginal or disturbing. All processes, including those that are usually on the margins, are considered central. The personal, subjective, emotional and spiritual, are also important and part of the forum, because it is in the unpredictable and imponderable where the creativity of a community emerges.

Often the rational is seen as the only way out of trouble or chaos. While being rational is at times essential, and it is understandable that people want to avoid falling into destructive emotions, unprocessed emotions can come back to sabotage rational resolutions. Worldwork has effective methods and tools that work with a wide range of conflict situations, including negotiations, problem-solving, debating of hot topics, or facilitating the transformation of deep-seated traumatic conflicts and cycles of revenge.

A governing idea of Worldwork is what Mindell calls 'Deep Democracy', the attitude or philosophy that all people, all parts and all feelings are needed to go beyond the repetition of patterns that are harmful to the individual or the community.

The 'Deep Democracy' principle considers that the seemingly chaotic has its own inherent order and that awareness and facilitation can help it to emerge. With awareness of this inherent order, people are able to formulate creative solutions for their communities.

Forums are gatherings where people come with a wide range of experiences, professions, from different regions, different war experiences, national and ethnic diversity. These forums give a space, protected by the spirit of deep democracy, where people know that what was difficult to say elsewhere could be said here, where the most difficult feelings and emotions are taken seriously. And most of all that even apparently impossible situations, and emotionally charged situations can transform.

The Purpose of Forums

Forums gather people together to interact around difficult themes. These forums fill a void - the missing community and grassroots dialogue needed for conflicts to transform and for communities to find creative directions. A forum is a microcosm of society. It is a place for society to meet itself, to self-reflect. The dynamics that participants witness and take part in during the forum reflect dynamics in their lives and communities. By entering into and gaining awareness of these dynamics within a facilitated setting, the participants gain insight into how they may contribute to conflict, and how they can contribute to making a difference in their communities.

Forums are an opportunity for individuals to become aware of themselves and their part in collective issues. They 'burn wood', which means that they get to know their emotions and have a chance to process the experiences in their personal history that fuel their reactions. This helps people reduce their propensity to reactive polarisations.

People experience the forums as challenging, but also regenerative. People go home changed in their attitudes and actions. This has a domino effect in their communities.

Eldership

We use the term 'eldership' not to refer to age, but to an attitude that cares for the whole community. The 'elder' cares for every part of the community, and all parts of a conflict as one's children. The elder is both totally involved and emotionally detached at the same time, able to welcome all of the people involved, all sides of the conflict, the different perceptions, emotions and styles.

The elder has the wisdom to not cast out one for the other, to not side with dominance and privilege, nor with the issues of minorities alone. It welcomes both resistance to conflict, and dealing with conflict. Like a steadying presence or an anchor, the elder creates a sense of calm and possibility. It welcomes the patterns of conflict but is not taken by them.

Eldership is potentially in everyone. It is an essential quality in a facilitator and in an organising team. At the same time, facilitators and organisers recognise and foster eldership among forum participants.

The very act of inviting people in conflict to talk together is an act of eldership, as is actively seeking a diversity of viewpoints and experiences among participants.

Another facet of eldership is recognising that it is the attitude which one approaches a difficult situation that makes all the difference. ‘C’est le ton qui fait la chanson’ i.e. it is the tone that makes a song’, says a French proverb. The elder seeks and unfolds the innate direction within a group, which may be difficult to discover in the mist of conflict. The basic principle of our forums is that the people and the underlying processes they share lead the agenda, not the facilitator.

Facilitating the Forum – The field and its dynamics

The concepts and methods described here are useful at different points throughout the forum.

Welcoming

As we welcome a group, we appreciate the people for coming, and appreciate the diversity of experience and viewpoints of those present. We say something personal about ourselves and make opportunities for the forum participants to begin to meet one another. We also introduce the structure of the forum. We describe its elements: large group discussion, small groups, opportunities for panel discussion, as well as opportunities to work with specific issues or projects. We usually say something about how communities have an inherent wisdom even when they are in the midst of difficulties, and that our goal is to invite and facilitate an interaction among participants includes and needs all points of view and experiences.

Atmosphere

A gathering of people has an atmosphere to it. The atmosphere reflects the issues, tensions, polarisations and other dynamics that organise the group’s interactions. People tend to perceive the atmosphere, and the feelings and currents going through a group, without knowing how to address this atmosphere. There’s a tendency rather to react to it. For example, in a tense atmosphere, people may stay aloof and guarded, or use other

strategies that give them a sense of control. It can be useful and relieving to say a few words about the atmosphere.

Sorting

We invite people to speak about issues in their community, what is on their minds and hearts. We go through a sorting process both in small groups and in the large group to find out how the forum participants would like to focus, knowing that there are so many important issues, and we will not be able to do it all. Sorting is an essential aspect of facilitating the process of conflict resolution. The topics people raise are a reflection of who the participants are, their often deeply emotional concerns, and how their own experiences link with the issues. It is therefore important to make people feel welcome, to interact with them and facilitate their contributions and to be alert to dynamics that are at once personal and related to the group's atmosphere.

As people bring up different themes, the facilitator searches – and often is helped by the participants – to group the themes and to recognise if and how the various themes hang together or if there may be a common denominator. Grouping the issues can help the facilitator and the participants to keep in mind all of the various themes that are important to the group, as well as how they may link to the topic that the group chooses to focus on. Recognising how all the topics are important separately, and how they may also be linked together, the facilitator helps the group reach a consensus about what to focus on.

Consensus

Consensus does not mean that we all agree unanimously. For the world to keep on turning, someone needs to disagree or be more interested in a different topic. We use the term 'consensus' to mean that a group comes to a momentary agreement about what it would like to focus on, knowing that other themes will need to be focused on at another point.

Consensus can be reached using a combination of different methods:

- Finding the pulse of the group: For example, the facilitator might name each theme and ask people to make a sound if they want to focus on that theme, and in this way measure the level of response to each. Voting by a simple hand count can be useful to determine the theme to focus on. Or, when a particular theme comes up, the atmosphere may become charged, with silence or laughter, indicating it is important to the group.
- Implicit consensus: When a certain topic is brought up during the sorting process, people sometimes chip in and before one knows it, the group is no longer sorting, but already interacting around a particular theme. While the facilitator can make sure that others are invited to speak who may still want to bring in another theme, the situation may mean that the group has already made an implicit consensus. The facilitator can frame this, which makes it explicit.

- Subgroups: In some situations the large group will support a subgroup to focus on their interests, even if it's not the majority's interest. In this way, the sub-group's issue becomes central to the whole group.
- Spin the pen: A great method of choosing and reaching consensus is through chance. Naturally, the group gets asked if they would like to take this chance - Someone spins a pen. Whoever it points to can pick the theme for the forum to focus on, or spin the pen again. This is such a refreshing, if not outlandish idea for people, that most people really enjoy it and wholeheartedly give consensus to whatever the chosen person suggests.
- The most difficult theme: Another method is for the facilitator to ask what is the most difficult, or most tense theme in the background and propose to make this central, so that people suffering from it do not have to continue suffering in silence and isolation.

Umbrella

The announced topic of a forum, as well as particular topics that the group chooses to focus on, are linked to many other issues. For example, if a group chooses to focus on the topic of 'youth', a range of issues may come up, such as education, economics, relationship between national groups, multicultural issues, family issues, abuse, drugs, gender issues, sexual orientation, and more. In this way, the topic 'youth' can be seen as an umbrella for many other issues. Thinking about and preparing a list of issues that one can anticipate may come up in relation to a particular topic is useful for the facilitator and for the group. Particularly around 'hot spots', the various issues bump into each other. With the foresight to anticipate this sort of complexity, the facilitators can frame the situation and help the group to stay focused. The facilitator will also be able to help the group welcome this interrelationship of issues and potential creativity in the entanglement of the issues.

Roles

Roles' help to represent a polarisation of positions. These roles are not the construct of the facilitator, but can be perceived when one listens to people interact. Roles are more than viewpoints. They are a kind of cluster of viewpoints and experiences. People can step into each spot to further differentiate these positions.

When facilitating, we remind people that roles help to deepen the interaction. At one point, a role is a kind of role 'play', and at another moment these same roles become extremely personal. By stepping very personally into the underlying roles that structure our conflicts and interactions, it is possible to relate more consciously with one another in community.

One way to understand this is that people tend to get swallowed up into polarised positions. Almost against our wish, we easily take 'sides', or 'fall into' a polarised field. The polarised field needs to be facilitated to bring awareness, differentiation, expression, responsibility and interaction between the roles.

Roles are greater than an individual. This means each role has various facets and so needs many people to express it. The individual is also greater than one role. This means any of us may be drawn to one role, but at another moment may discover both sides of the polarity within us. It can be transformative for a group, when someone is able to speak very personally from a role, and assume personal accountability within the role. The polarisation and distance between people may dissolve and a sense of being part of a bigger whole emerges.

A polarisation may begin with Group A saying to Group B “You have done terrible things that were hurtful to my group.” Group B then says: “No, it is you who hurt and oppressed us.” This symmetrical blaming is characteristic of a polarised field and cycling conflicts. At this moment, the facilitator can point out the roles that are organising people’s relationship to each other and their identity in the interaction.

In the above example, there are two main roles, the role of being hurt or oppressed, and the role of the hurter or oppressor. In this example, and in most conflicts, almost everyone identifies with the role of being hurt and oppressed, while needing someone to be accountable for having been oppressive or hurtful.

When facilitating, people are at first a bit surprised to be invited to use the roles to represent their viewpoints in the field. They then realise this makes them freer to speak without being locked into one role. They can speak their mind and step out again, or even change to the other role. This helps individuals to become aware of their own wholeness, as well as supporting fluidity in the group dialogue.

In the process of unfolding roles, various dynamics can become apparent. Here are a central few:

Hot Spots

We mention during our introduction that while facilitating we will notice ‘hot spots’, points where something is said that is sensitive or controversial. The ‘hot spot’ sizzles. It may be subtle or strong. Everyone intuitively recognises such moments, where everyone goes silent or perhaps laughs, changes the subject, or tempers may flare. When ignored, hot spots return, and may become volatile if ignored over time. They are points where conflicts escalate, cycle, or where people retreat and go hopeless. What is exciting is that hot spots are also points of potential transformation. They are doorways to change.

A hot spot can also be understood as a point of instability that appears to lead to chaos, but with awareness it can be a turning point from the past (the repeating conflict) to the possibility of a different future.

Edges

When people speak personally, or in a role, they may reach a limit to being able to fully complete what they are saying. At this limit to communication, people might also be

meeting a limit to their identity or a belief system that tells them they cannot go on. They may fear the consequences of going further, be it retribution, escalation, or inner criticism. Or they may not have a pattern that communicating about such things, or in such a way, is possible.

At this limit of communication and identity may be a belief system. We call this the 'edge'. A person might be sharing something important, and need welcoming to go further. Sometimes just saying: It sounds like you might have more to say, if you would like - will make the person feel welcome to continue. The edge of a group might be in listening to a certain group or certain experiences.

Burning Wood

Burning wood refers to the need to express and get to know our emotions and personal history, how we tend to react or polarise, and so perpetuate the conflicts we are trying to address. We call this burning wood because by working on our personal history and emotional affects, we burn the fuel that perpetuates conflict. Burning wood means having compassion for one's own story, to be able to express it fully, and so also to develop fluidity.

Ghost roles

The 'Ghost Role' is an implicit role that everyone is referring to, but no one feels accountable for. It is usually projected on someone far away. Because no one feels responsible for or identified with this role, the behaviour the participants speak about (as a third party) is a behaviour they may also be doing themselves in the moment. So, the conflict persists as a repetitive dialogue in which each side mirrors the other without awareness. Roles represent a deeper structure to the interaction or conflict. In the discussion about roles above, we spoke about how in most conflicts, almost everyone identifies with the role of the one suffering. The one who caused the suffering tends to be a 'ghost role'. Other typical ghost roles that arise in forums include "those with power," "the international community," or "our children." It can be very useful for the group if someone is able to represent and speak for these ghost roles.

Rank dynamics

Very apparent to those suffering and often creating strong reactions are the dynamics of rank, privilege, prejudice and power. Most people have experienced people in power over them and their misuse of that power. More often than not they have been humiliated by that abuse. But what is less apparent to most of us is that we often act with power and rank and prejudice without any awareness – and if aware, without wanting to be accountable for it.

Rank refers to the privileges we have in relation to one another, whether due to social rank dynamics or due to acquired skills or characteristics. There is a tendency to be aware of the privileges and power you don't have, rather than the privileges and power you do have. Not being aware of one's power or rank does not mean it does not exist and impact those around us. For example, when people feel insulted or hurt, they may react with rage. They may be identified with their lack of power, fully unaware of the power and the impact of their behaviour on others.

Unconsciousness of rank dynamics is one of the key factors in perpetuating conflict. Facilitating awareness of rank dynamics is an essential element of conflict resolution.

Three dimensions

When facilitating, it is useful to observe the different ‘dimensions’ of experience. We use the terms ‘consensus reality’ to refer to the outer context, issues and content. The ‘dreaming’ refers to subjective experiences, and the dream-like or archetypal polarised roles underlying. The ‘sentient’ dimension is experienced as a sense of interconnectedness, preceding the polarisations, or as a creative source from which the complexity of processes arise.

Levels

We also look at how processes manifest at different levels – individual, relationship, organisational, and collective. Think of a conflict you have with someone who you can’t stand. The problem you have with that person might also exist inside of you as two parts of yourself in conflict. The dynamics are occurring at both an individual and a relationship level. Perhaps this conflict also links to a larger issue on your team or within your organisation. Or it may be useful to look at the social or collective dynamics involved. When facilitating it is very valuable to be aware of and frame which level(s) you are working on. Personal relationships are related to collective issues that need addressing, too. Or when apparently talking about ‘politics’ and large-scale collective issues, it is vital to realise they are also personal.

Dynamics of transformation

Dynamic interactions in a forum can unfold and deepen because the facilitators intervene – sorting, creating consensus, finding roles and ghost roles, inviting people to interact, noticing and framing hotspots, carefully unfolding processes to their core, framing moments of change when people reach a deeper contact in which they share the field rather than being polarised. Transforming moments need to be noticed, framed, and anchored. This gives the participants an overview and a chance to reflect on the process and on themselves.

Forums need facilitative awareness for people to evolve beyond their polarisations and reach moments when they transform in their identity, interactions and feelings towards one another.

IV. Working with Community Trauma and Issues of Accountability

As a team and together with the forum participants, we learned an enormous amount about how to work with community-wide trauma, and the community’s need to grapple with issues of accountability.

Working with Community Trauma

To talk or not to talk about the 'history' between us

One tendency in forums is to not want to talk about persisting tensions and polarisations. This drive to move forward is essential. People might say, "It's time to move forward to the future". Everyone wants to move on and become free from the tragic past. In order to move forward, there is another essential drive, to include and resolve the 'past', in the current polarisations, repeating traumatic experiences, and in the open and unresolved questions.

If any of us think of what we are like around even relatively small matters, we know that a natural tendency is to try to bypass tensions for fear of making matters worse. In post-conflict situations, communities naturally hope to bypass the most sensitive and difficult issues among them, because they are afraid of triggering reactions and setting off the conflict again. Trying to ignore persisting tensions and polarisations, however, can stifle community interactions, block community and economic development, create hopelessness or lead to renewed conflict.

A 'hot spot', as discussed above, is a potentially volatile moment of communication where people may back off from the subject, or a conflict may rapidly escalate. While it is natural to try to step back from the hot spot, this can be dangerous. When ignored, hot spots return and—if ignored repeatedly—can lead to future escalation and possible violence. Encouraging and facilitating community dialogue at hot spots can lead to understanding and potential transformation.

Hot spots and trauma dynamics

When you touch a 'hot spot' in a conflict zone, you meet community-wide trauma just below the surface. Special attitudes and skills are needed to work with awareness, thoroughness and care.

Understanding shock

Trauma occurs around shock. Life as you knew it was interrupted, for your personal life and for the community. People sometimes experience shock as one part of the personality just going ahead and doing necessary tasks. But, one part cannot quite go along. It remains behind, with a feeling of being cut off or numb. The initial experiences creating the shock remain just below the surface as if suspended outside of time.

Witness

In every day life, we perceive our experiences, reflect and narrate them. Around traumatic experience, perceiving and witnessing the experience is too much to bear. The experience

may be impossible to comprehend, perceive, or include in our sense of dignity and humanity as individuals and communities. What happened may be in this sense 'unspeakable'.

The memory of the event may be separated from its associated emotion. For example, someone can tell the details of the story, but with an apparent lack of emotional response. Or, the other way round, someone may lose the details, and have gaps in the story, while feeling very upset and agitated.

When an individual suffers trauma, part of the personality moves ahead, leaving the traumatic experience behind. The traumatic experience remains, as if frozen in time until it can be witnessed. And it repeats and intrudes in the form of nightmares, flashbacks, and other symptoms.

There are various sorts of psychological and biological explanations for this replay of traumatic experience. An important way to understand this feature of traumatic experience is that the traumatic experience is replaying as if seeking a witness, to be perceived and included – into an individual's personal history, and into the community and collective history.

What to do at a hot spot, with community-wide trauma?

So, when touching a hot spot, in negotiations, meetings, round-tables or community forums, ignoring it is not useful. Nor is it useful to fall into the volatility. Just naming the hot spot can already be relieving, and letting people know that this is the 'right' spot, where we can bring awareness and carefully unfold and transform our communication and awareness.

We have seen how the dynamics of trauma involve two (conflicting) tendencies. One tendency is to cut off from the experience, and the other is the need to tell the story. What is needed is to support awareness of both tendencies. Cutting off supports isolation and further trauma. But, with awareness, the need for distance may be the care, protection, choice, and detachment needed to not feel taken along into the repeating story. The need to tell the story can be destructive if it repeats endlessly, without witness, as a nightmare or flashback. With awareness, the story can be told, heard and witnessed. This can bring about essential healing for individuals and society to move forward whole.

Bridging the distance

There's a story about trauma that we often tell, because it is about the isolation and distance and bridging that distance. At our first forum in Osijek, several participants were from Sarajevo. One woman from Sarajevo said to the other participants "You hold us apart. You treat us like museum pieces. You look, but don't touch". This was just following the siege in Sarajevo as the world looked on. A silence came over the room. Then one woman crossed the room, and kneeled facing her. "It's true. I have kept you at a distance. I saw Sarajevo on television. At that point the war in Croatia had stopped, and though I lived only a couple hundred kilometres away, I watched, but I remember I couldn't feel anything. I remember

I was glad it was there and not here.” Both women began to cry. Then, looking around the room, we saw that every person had tears streaming down their faces. The facilitators cried, too. The group continued to share their experiences of distance, and pain. The interpreter was also crying. At first she was very upset that she could not maintain her professional distance. We told her that in this situation it was okay, and she broke down and wept, as others pitched in to help.

This story is important, because it demonstrates the isolation between us, and how when the distance was acknowledged, the distance was bridged. Everyone recognised how they kept distance to their own pain and to the pain of one another. Everyone recalled the feeling of isolation, as the world sat by, at a distance, watching it all on television.

Choice and invitation

Choice is vital around trauma – if, when and with whom to share the story. At the point of the trauma there was no choice, as the individual and whole community was taken up in the traumatic events. Choice needs to be accompanied by an invitation and genuine expression of interest. People easily feel that they cannot speak because there is no one to listen. This is due to the numbness in community, the overload and overwhelm, not being able to hear yet another story. Or people may feel they cannot speak, for fear that one’s story will awaken another’s pain. Or others have far worse stories. Or the story may bring tears, which will never stop.

Community trauma and timing

People may feel that the traumatic events are too recent to speak about. Or, they may feel that it all happened too long ago, and it is time to forget it and move on. Around community-wide trauma, it may take years and generations for people to speak, and for people to listen. As a world, we are in need of models to invite and support this process.

A good guideline is that it is always either too soon or too late to talk about the trauma. In other words, it is never too soon or too late – any time may be the right time.

One man from our forums who had held a lot of responsibility for his community was unwell, with a tremor and physical symptoms of trauma. We were nearing the end of a forum, and as often happened, there was a great party, everyone singing into all hours of the night. Two of us (Nives and Arlene) recently recalled this night. At about 2am, some of us were saying good night. Nives offered to interpret for Arlene, as she said good night to this man, and letting him know that if ever he wanted to tell his story, she would be interested to listen. He said “Now?” Rather than try to determine if there had been a misunderstanding, Nives and Arlene looked at each other and thought, “Why not? Now is a good time.” The three of us sat together, outdoors under a canopy of vine leaves, next to the sea. He told his story. As we listened, the sun came up. At the start of the violence in his community, a close friend (a Croat) had come running to him, asking his advice. Should he flee? He (a Serb) had assured

his friend that he would be okay, that he would be able to use his position to protect him. He was unable to protect his friend who was killed, and he had never been able to forgive himself, nor contact the man's family.

Talking about and representing what created the terror and trauma

It can also be extremely helpful to address and if possible represent what has caused the trauma or terror.

During an afternoon session, a group talked about how readily their contributions to community are unwelcome, put down, leading to hopelessness. After the session closed, we learned that one participant had become tremendously agitated. She said that she felt afraid of a group of participants who had been making sarcastic side comments and jokes during the large group session. She was a Croat, and they were a group of Serb men who she knew from her community. Panicked and practically unable to speak, she considered leaving the forum. We sat with her a while, and she decided that she wanted to stay.

When we opened the forum the next morning, we said that we realised yesterday's topic of contributions being unwelcome may have touched onto experiences of feeling not only unwelcome, but actual exclusion from community, including experiences of terror. After we had said this, the woman spontaneously stood up and came to the centre of the room, and asked to speak. She told a story that she said she had never told before about how she had been arrested and terrorised over three days by Serb paramilitary soldiers who threatened to "disappear" her.

We supported her, as she spoke, recognising her fear of speaking in the group. We asked her permission to represent the role of those who had threatened to expel or 'disappear' her. We then also represented that part of the group that may not want to hear her story now. Many nodded in recognition as we said that there may be a role in the room now that says: "Don't speak. It's too hard to listen." "There are too many stories like yours."

A participant came forward, offering to speak personally from this role: "The reason I can't hear you is because of all the dead, all those who disappeared, who can never tell their stories." He said the only way he could respond would be to go to the main square and "set myself on fire". We asked him to express in movement some of the rage, pain and fire, beyond words. The group was deeply moved. One of the men who had been sarcastic now came forward to stand with the woman. Warmly, he encouraged her to continue her story, assuring her that he was by her side and wanted to listen. She was deeply touched as he assured her that he would remain her ally, during the forum and back home. She and the whole group felt an enormous sense of relief and healing, as if whole again in community.

Accountability

Accountability and meeting, transforming conflict

It can be transformative for communities for the despair and rage of lost lives and lost years to be heard and witnessed in the public setting of a forum.

In the Truth Commission of South Africa, the country supported the communal witnessing of the stories, the expression of the pain, and the search for truth and accountability, which supported the nation to move forward. In our model of community forums, there is a witnessing of individual and community trauma, along with grappling with questions of individual and collective responsibility, at a level of personal, relational and community interactions.

In one forum a Croat man spoke about the loss of lives and lost years. He spoke about his belief that it is possible to work together to build the future. But, he said, I need someone to stand opposite me, who can say he was carrying a gun – because “I cannot believe that everyone was just peeling potatoes”. A young woman became furious. “You are looking for accountability, but you won’t get it this way!” “ You won’t get it by discriminating against Serb returnees!” “I am a Serb returnee. I had to flee for my life, leave my home and community, twice - in 91 and 95”, and she began to tell her personal story. “What right do you have to ask this of me?” He insisted, “I have the right and need to know, for precisely that reason - so that I don’t hold everyone responsible”. A man from his region (a Serb) now responded. “You are looking for accountability. You want to know who was carrying a gun, but I can tell you the reason that no one will answer you. It is because most everyone was carrying a gun, and there is too much fear and shame to speak about it.” A silence fell over the group. For the two men, there was a sense of contact. The group was touched. Many said that this conversation never happens, yet needs to, because otherwise it remains in the atmosphere unspoken.

The story highlights some important and complex issues concerning accountability. When the Croat man asks for someone to stand opposite him and have an interaction about accountability, this is perceived by some as the necessary step to move forward, and it is perceived by others as inflammatory and discriminating against Serbs in the region. The call for accountability is seen by some as an affront that perpetuates discrimination against Serbs, in a collective assigning of guilt.

From the Croat man’s point of view, he needs this accountability precisely for the purpose of not assigning collective guilt, to achieve some kind of accountability and closure. As understandable and essential as this plea is, on the receiving end, it is taken as an affront to basic human rights, human dignity and ‘right of return’, especially considering the violence and suffering on all sides, and considering the current position of Serbs as a minority group.

The two needs are interlocked - 1) for accountability (on all sides, and with recognition that this does not mean all sides are equally responsible) and 2) for human rights and ending discrimination against minority groups. They need to be differentiated and both need full attention.

The personal interaction in our forum (above) highlights how issues of accountability between ethnic groups are only meaningful when individual experience is also taken into account. On the other hand, it also highlights the necessity and value of being able to consider and take responsibility for the behaviour of one's group. And to recognise that while all sides were involved, all sides are not necessarily equally responsible. This can have a transforming impact for post-conflict societies.

Accountability and going forward

One of the outcomes of forums, particularly concerning community trauma and accountability, is that people say that they feel a new sense of vitality and contact to themselves and to their communities. Many describe a sense of healing in their own lives, and in their impact to others' lives in community.

Forum participants repeatedly say that they come away uplifted, with a sense of responsibility towards their community. One former soldier said "It had never occurred to me before that I had anything to do with what happened in our region... This feeling of responsibility does not make me feel guilty. It gives me hope for the future, knowing I can make a difference to my community."

V. Phases of Post Conflict Forums

People sometimes ask whether there was a development within the forums from the earlier years to the later years? Did the people and the issues change? The answer to that is yes.

Over the years during our work in Croatia, we noticed that the groups went through certain phases. We believe these to be phases through which many post-conflict societies pass.

We mention these phases not to prescribe a certain pattern of development, but rather to describe what we encountered. We do this in order to tune the facilitator's awareness to the possibility that these phases might occur, and to give a map that might allow a facilitator to find the way.

The truth is that what happens in a group is a process, rather than a series of phases. The point is not to try to move people from one phase to the next. Rather, we facilitate where people actually are, and face the group wherever it is. Bringing awareness to these different phases allows them to develop.

These phases appeared over time. Indeed, it may well be that an earlier phase is needed as preparation for a later phase. But these phases are not only linear. They could happen within a single forum, or they might occur from one forum to the next, or over periods of years. They can happen anywhere anytime or they can repeat.

While all phases are important and needed, each one also presents challenges that must be worked with in order to help the group or society to grow and change. In the description that follows, we outline some of the phases we encountered, and give some ideas about the challenges and opportunities inherent to each phase. With that in mind, here are the various phases we discovered, presented in the general order in which they appeared.

There Is No Problem / The Problem Is Out There

In the first phase, the group does not see a problem or, more accurately, they see the problem as being “out there.” When we first arrived in Croatia, a year after the war ended, we did a forum in Osijek, a city that had seen some of the heaviest fighting and shelling on the front line between the Croats and the Serbs. We sat with a group of 40 people from different parts of Croatia, and Bosnia - Serbs, Croats and Muslims who all agreed on one thing: “We are not in conflict.” We heard again and again that, “There is no ethnic tension here.” “We love each other.” “We are the humanitarians.” “We are not the people who created the conflict.”

This phase is vital for the society. In order to stand strongly for peace and humanitarianism and in order to try to look toward a better future, at a certain point people tend to believe that they are not involved in the conflict. At the same time, without acknowledging that there is a conflict, and that it is still present in some way here and now, a group cannot move forward toward real peace. A tense stalemate arises, with people smiling through clenched teeth -- not a firm foundation upon which a post-conflict society can rebuild itself.

This was the state of affairs at that first forum in Osijek. The tension was thick as all sides proclaimed their tolerance for one another. During the breaks, Serbs had coffee with Serbs, Croats with Croats, and Bosnian Muslims with Bosnian Muslims. Finally, one woman found the courage to say, “I feel a little more comfortable with people from my ethnic group.” There was an earthquake of reaction as people shouted, “I knew I could not trust you!”

The logjam was broken. Everyone realised that the conflict was here among us. It was happening here and now, not just out there or in the past. It is important to remember that in post-conflict societies, the past is present in the moment. And the third party (the role with whom no one identifies) is present in the moment. In this case the third party was the role of the “bad ones” who don’t like or trust one another, the “war-like” ones. With this logjam broken, we had entered the second phase.

Symmetrical Accusation

The second phase is one of symmetrical accusations. People on each side talk about how they have been hurt by the other side. In Osijek, we as facilitators asked the participants why they did not trust the woman who had dared to speak the unspeakable. "Because her side did this to me. They did this to my daughter." This sparked stories from the other side, about atrocities and hurt. During these stories, it was difficult for people to listen to each other. Rather, it was important for them to tell of their pain and hurt. We as facilitators took the role of the listener, expressing our pain and horror and sorrow and anguish at hearing such things. What is important about this phase is that no one had had a chance to speak publicly about what they had endured, and about what had been done to them, their families and their communities. The importance of being able to share these experiences in community cannot be overstated. The challenge or difficulty of this phase is that the recitation of hurts and wrongs perpetrated by the other side inflames a symmetrical response in which the other side feels the need to say -- and really must say -- what happened to them, because they have not been heard either. (Of course the phrase "the other side" does not do justice to the complexity of many post-conflict situations, like the participation of Serbs, Croats, and Muslims -- as well as many other ethnic groups and people of mixed ethnicities -- in the Balkans wars.)

One aspect of this phase of symmetrical accusation has to do with competing versions of history. During our second forum, in the beautiful seaside town of Trogir, a Serb stood and told of the terrible things that Croats had done in 1995. A Croat immediately stood and recounted the horrifying deeds of the Serbs in 1991. A Serb then talked about what had happened in World War II. And so it went back and forth until, in 15 minutes, we were in the 14th Century. Each side's version of history included, in great detail, the atrocities of the other, while leaving out or glossing over what their own group had done.

Facilitators are faced with two challenges during this phase. The first is to be an active and compassionate listener, which models that which is so far missing in the group. (No one is listening to the other side.) The second challenge is to simultaneously honour the stories, the pain and the justifiable anger, while also helping to find a common and shared humanity.

One possible method of addressing this second challenge is to somehow represent the "ghost role", the part that everyone is talking about but not identifying with. In Trogir, we facilitators heard that each side was really talking about the same role: the killer. We facilitators asked the group's permission to represent the killer. We then played the role of the one who is thrilled by the ultimate power of killing. To our surprise, a woman in the group said that she knew this man -- he had been in her kitchen. She went on to say that during the war, a war criminal had entered her kitchen, threatening and terrorising her and her children. She stood to show us what he was like, shouting at the whole group and strutting around in a menacing way.

At first there was a frozen shock among the participants. Then people started to react to this killer, talking back to him, saying all the things they had not been able to say when confronted by people like this during the war. Suddenly the whole group was united against the killer. The woman sat down and joined the chorus against him. There was an agreement that we all hated and feared this role, and that we all wanted to take a stand against it. Now there were no symmetrical accusations. There was a realization that everyone had suffered, everyone was outraged about the war, and everyone needed someone to take accountability.

In the first phase, everyone was also against the war-like ones, distancing themselves from the conflict. When people accuse each other, they become engaged in conflict. At the moment of accusation, both sides react and are emotional. This is a point where symmetrical accusations usually repeat and escalate. With facilitation, though, this emotional engagement is an opportunity for transformation. In this example, the transformation occurred when the people from all sides of the war were able to unite in their outrage towards those who created the suffering. Resolution comes out of engaging with conflict with awareness, rather than denying it.

Listening and Responding to Suffering

After violent conflict, there is a need to talk about and respond to suffering.

In all of our forums, people spoke personally about their own suffering and the wounds their group had endured. Sometimes the “other” side would respond by speaking of their own wounds, yet this was different than the phase of symmetrical accusations in a couple of key ways. First of all, it did not feel like the stories were meant to accuse, rather it seemed that people needed to talk about their own pain. Secondly, people were really starting to listen to one another. There were long silences after someone spoke. There were tears around the room as participants felt the depth of suffering and despair that was being expressed.

There are two challenges to this phase. One person’s story can trigger pain or fear or trauma in those who are listening. People are often afraid to talk about what happened to them for fear of triggering memories and trauma in others. It is common to think that if we just don’t talk about it, then maybe it will go away. At the same time, telling one’s story, or hearing someone else’s story, can be healing. And the memories and reactions that are stimulated by someone else’s suffering can be the beginning of a thawing process for the listener. People often told us that it was incredibly painful to talk about their pain, and to listen to others’ pain, but that it helped them to feel alive again, to begin to shift their own frozen traumas.

It is important to remember the power of telling these stories in community. The traumas were certainly individual on one level, and yet they were also collective traumas. When a whole society is traumatized, the healing must also take place (at least partially) in the collective. (See the section on Trauma and Accountability, above.)

The second challenge is that sometimes when people express suffering, it can set off another round of blame and attacks. Very careful work and skills are needed for working with such “hot spots.” It helps when the facilitators can encourage the group to be aware of and include all the feelings that arise, and take care of one another. As always, it is vital for the facilitators to actively listen and express their feelings, which is a way of modelling this for the participants. In these forums, such modelling contributed to a capacity on the part of the participants to be with one another, to listen to one another, to feel the humanity of the whole, and to feel the tragedy on all sides.

Taking Responsibility for Own Group

This capacity in turn led to the next phase, in which people began taking responsibility for what their own group had done. In one forum, a Croat woman in late middle age began by telling the group about the horrors and hardships that she and her family had been forced to face during the war. Then she did something remarkable. She began to talk about terrible things that Croats had done to Serbs. The room was silent. After a long pause, a Serb woman stood up and talked about the horrible things she had endured at the hands of Croats. Then she began to list very specific things that Serbs had done to Croats in her town. Again, the group sat in silence.

Surely, not everyone was happy about it. In other circumstances, people who spoke out about the atrocities committed by their own side were branded traitors. But these women had not only documented their own suffering, which gave them credibility in the eyes of their own groups, they also modelled eldership and a way forward. Although what they were doing was dangerous for them, it was safer for all.

Everyone knew that something new was happening, that a line had been crossed. This was not a matter of ‘neutrality’ or presuming that everyone is equally responsible for the war. Rather these brave women had forged the way for others to take stands against the horrors, no matter who had done what to whom.

Taking Responsibility for the Community, and for the Future

The Serb woman went on. “It’s not that I’m personally guilty, because I’m not. But if I were silent, I would not be taking responsibility. By speaking I take responsibility.” This poignant statement shifted the group into a new phase in which people started taking responsibility for the whole community. They realised that taking responsibility did not just mean saying “I/we did this to you;” it also meant taking responsibility for what they did not do, or for what they had allowed to happen. People reflected on the lead up to the war, and felt remorse for not having done more to counteract the xenophobic trends in their own communities and in themselves. And they realised that right now, as leaders in their organisations and local governments, etc, they could have an impact on what was happening in their communities, and that they were all in some way responsible for what happens in the future. The group had moved from focusing on past, to the present and the future. Participants spoke in small groups about what they would do if they could identify with a sense of responsibility and leadership in their own communities.

Six months later, one young woman said that this discussion had had a profound impact on her. A nuclear waste dump had been slated to be built in her town. She had always thought that as one person she could have no impact on the big decisions that affected her and her community. But the previous forum had taught her that she could take responsibility and leadership. She started a petition, and gathered enough signatures to halt construction. When she met with the mayor, he said that he was too small to change anything. “I told him that he is not small,” she said. “Imagine me, a young woman, telling the mayor that he is not small!”

Living In Multi-Cultural Society

Forums often focus on ethnic-national polarisations and post-war issues among Croats, Serbs and Muslims. Especially in early forums, discussions about multiculturalism related only to the problem of being able to live together again after conflict). As people were able to work with the most entrenched and polarised tensions and post-war issues within forums, we observed that there was an increasing ability and interest to also call attention to a wide range of multicultural issues. This included a greater focus on people of mixed ethnic national backgrounds, Hungarians, Roma, Russian and other ethnic minorities, as well as a range of diversity issues including religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, health, age and more.

The question as to whether and how to build multicultural societies arises everywhere. One position in this discussion presumes that a particular ethnic, national (or mainstream) group is the only one that belongs in the region and that others may be tolerated but don't have inherent rights. Another position holds that in order to have a thriving society, everyone, whether majority or minority share equal rights and are valued and needed.

Grappling with this question and its associated issues in post-conflict societies is an essential phase that is compounded by post-war polarisations and open matters of accountability that also need attention. (See above section on accountability.) It is also an essential phase on the pathway to democracy building.

Recognising Milestones and Looking Forward

When people have been through violent conflict, they are often perceived, and may perceive themselves, in terms of their needs. Whole communities are in need. In Croatia, the 'Areas of State Concern' are areas that were devastated by the war and in need of special attention and consideration.

At the same time, those who suffered the war and have committed to rebuilding communities have experiences and skills that are needed by the rest of Croatia, the region, Europe and the world.

In this phase, people begin to identify with what they have accomplished in their communities. They celebrate successful projects, as well as the tenacity, heart, courage and spirit that has kept them going. There is a recognition that as whole communities they have been through hell and back, and are still here, building, discovering and modelling ways forward. In forums, as people share their challenges and achievements, they begin to acknowledge one another and see that, in fact, the region as a whole is changing and is moving forward.

At the same time, there is an outspoken realization among forum participants that processing together the tensions and polarities MUST continue - that it in some ways has barely started. This is distinct from endlessly repeating the old arguments, resentment and hopelessness without facilitation.

A long-term perspective is needed. Consider how difficult it is for an individual who has suffered the loss of a loved one; it can take years to be able to speak about experience of loss. For a post-conflict community, the need to engage in dialogue is urgent, yet it needs lots of time.

In this phase, it is no longer a question of talking about the past OR moving forward. Rather we must continue to work on our persisting history and trauma together, AND we are moving forward together intact.

VI. From Community Polarisation to Economic Recovery

Individuals who have a sense that community transformation is possible, and a feeling of responsibility and initiative are needed within communities devastated by war. They are the community leaders who can rebuild communities from inside. They need opportunities to turn dreams into actual projects. They need support for their initiatives - opportunities to receive technical and financial support, to foster community relationships and to work with the tensions and blocks to community development to make it possible.

In Part 3, below, we describe the work 'on the ground' meeting people in community and mobilising this community leadership, supporting cooperation, and the technical and economic support needed for implementing projects.

Here, in this last section of Part 2, we continue to look at the role of forums, particularly how processing tensions and conflicts, and supporting vision and cooperation is necessary for successful project development.

Forums and Project Development

We receive a lot of feedback from participants that their participation in forums has a great impact on them, both personally and in their work in community when they get home. People sometimes say that they arrived hopeless and burnt out at the forum, but go home full of energy and a sense of possibility. Moreover they have specific ideas, patterns and skills to work with the challenging situations they are meeting in their day-to-day efforts to rebuild community.

From our earliest forums, we devoted sessions to work with people on particular difficulties they were meeting in their communities, in their work as social workers, mayors, youth workers, lawyers, teachers, counsellors and more.

Since 2006, our programmes are geared specifically to address the link between processing the tensions and polarisations in community and implementing projects for economic recovery and community development in the Areas of Special State Concern.

Anyone who has ever implemented a project, or set up a business, association or organisation has had the experience of meeting complications and challenges along the way – including external practical obstacles, relationship obstacles, and internal challenges of maintaining awareness and motivation in the midst of endless problems.

In post-conflict countries, such normal challenges to project development are multiplied. There are many reasons for this including a collapsed economy, people leaving the area, mined fields, a lack of social cohesion due to persisting polarisations between ethnic-national groups, and compounding hopelessness.

In the forums, individuals and small teams have opportunities to focus on particular projects, and on local networking, as well as to discuss wider regional issues. The blocks to community projects that are usually spoken about involve political polarisations, related to tensions between ethnic-national groups.

Our model recognises that technical and economic support are vital. Yet for this support to be effective, people need opportunities to address and transform community relationships and to find practical pathways forward. People welcome the opportunity to work directly with these challenges – to ‘map’ the divisive positions surrounding their project implementation, and to learn how to facilitate these dynamics, rather than only feeling caught in them.

Small teams working together on a project can explore their vision and goals, as well as process tensions among themselves, releasing creativity, excitement, and energy as they take the next practical steps. With support from the facilitators and the other forum participants, they can work with their community’s tensions, as well as work with the ways these tensions manifest within their own team. This impacts team relationships, and in turn their ability to facilitate these issues in community. It also impacts the successful outcome of the projects.

In forums we have worked with teams on projects such as:

- developing a road and cooperation among businesses to attract tourism into the region;
- making a film about a region to attract tourism;
- establishing a community centre;
- establishing youth centres;
- furthering agriculture in the community;
- ecological initiatives, and more.

We work with challenges faced by regional managers of social services in their regions, mayors of communities, and leaders of international organisations, as well as with people involved with grassroots initiatives such as legal advocacy, working with separated communities; support for people with disabilities and other minority groups, and local economic initiatives such as crafts or producing honey.

Forums and Regional Networking

In our recent forums, a strong focus has been on supporting people living within the same town, village or region to work together on issues relevant to their area. This has been very exciting because of the relationships and networking that has resulted.

Forum participants are enthusiastic about coming to the centre in the forum, (fishbowl style) to discuss and process specific problems facing their region. Participants have a need for interaction among people of the same region because it supports them to talk about and process what happened in their particular region during the war, and to talk about current regional issues as well as supporting local identity based on geography. That it happens in the middle of the forum, where participants from other regions are observing, creates a sense of belonging to a wider field, and the basis for networking. Everyone's experience and work is seen as important with respect to regional differences, and simultaneously relevant to those observing. People working in the middle feel that their experiences are witnessed and in this way included in the larger field.

Training Facilitators

An important feature of our forums is that the focus is not primarily educational. Rather the forums are opportunities to meet and to interact - to process the past and create the future. There has always been, however, an educational element within our forums. This might include learning about dynamics that perpetuate conflict, such as dynamics of rank and power, and basic skills for conflict facilitation. Or if we have a 'panel' or 'fishbowl' conversation about particular issues facing minority groups, this also entails an educational component.

There is a strong need and request from participants for training in the skills needed to work with tensions and conflicts in community. For some years, we had training days attached to the forums, for a core group interested in learning facilitation skills. Our experience was that one-day trainings are too short.

Our current Leadership Training involves three three-day modules. This is still very short for our goals of passing on skills for people to continue facilitating within their communities. But, it is intensive and a very effective beginning. Participants are chosen for the programme on the basis of their interest to make a difference in their communities. They may be leaders in the sense of carrying a dream or passion to make a difference in their communities.

What we teach includes: understanding how fields polarise; understanding collective trauma; working with the facilitators' process; understanding the complexities of rank dynamics; and how to support and facilitate one's own emotional responses, so as to be able to facilitate the overall situation. These are skills of Process Oriented Psychology, unique in their application to post-conflict zones. While it takes several years for full training in these methods, even a few days of intensive training can greatly impact someone's attitudes and skills facilitating conflict.

These training seminars have been nothing short of exhilarating. People feel they can present the very outer limits of what they are capable of dealing with, and then find pathways forward to transform the situations. The learning is at all times 'hands on'. Wherever possible we invite two or more people from the same region to the trainings, so that their learning together can support their ongoing work together or contact with one another.

The Youth and Our Future

Over the years, we have had the pleasure of a few young people attending the forums. How inspiring this is to the older generation to see young people take part. Young people say that it is deeply relieving and freeing for them to be in an environment where they see people speaking openly and emotionally about polarised and potentially volatile conflict, in a way that is facilitated, and has the chance to transform. They never see this happen, yet always feel the effects of the unprocessed conflicts. It is also relieving to see the networking and appreciation for what is occurring and the possibility of a different future.

Due to special outreach and invitation, we are delighted that many more young people now take part in the forums. They speak up about the difficulties they face in their communities. They repeatedly say that the voices of young people are not heard in their communities, not included, not taken seriously. They describe a dire situation in which young people have insufficient activities or opportunities to contribute, and are hopeless about their futures, getting involved with drugs and other destructive behaviours. And young people are leaving their communities due to insufficient activities or opportunities for work.

When young people are invited to speak, they have a lot to say. We meet young people who want to stay in their home regions, and to create their collective future. Some grew up in the war, and carry their own serious traumas from the war. Others may not remember much

of the war. All need patterns and opportunities to discover how to outgrow the isolation of their parents' generation and the cycling of conflict.

And they are creating projects to make this happen. In one forum, a group of about ten young people (18-30) gathered in the middle of the forum fishbowl style, after asking if they could come into the centre to talk among themselves, and to the group, about a project that they had developed over the three days they were together in the forum.

They were concerned about a region where only elderly were left and who were in need of help to pick the plums in their fields. The young people came up with a simple and effective project idea, to create a retreat for young people from around the Areas of State Concern, for recreation and education, and at the same time to help their elders to pick plums. As they discussed their plan, the whole forum was buzzing – not only in delight for the young people's very heartfelt and great idea, but because of the immediate networking that was engendered.

The young people wondered aloud how they would bring everyone together, and someone in the room spontaneously volunteered their association's van. Some war veterans said they still had tents that could be used. With a spirit of pleasure and solidarity, the whole project was led by these young people, but shared by the whole community.

Over the years, and still now, the deep concern about youth leaving their communities can be equated with the fear that there is no future, no renewal. When the youth leave, it represents the hopelessness in the region, and the real threat of communities dying. On another level, though, you could say the youth want to leave behind the persisting resentments and old worldviews of the previous generation, which they feel gives them no future.

Just as youth leaving an area may symbolise a missing sense of future, and their need to walk away from old patterns, their active involvement is symbolic of renewal, the possibility of future.



Part Three: Community Interventions

As indicated elsewhere in this handbook, an essential element of our approach is our recognition of the capacity within community and of the resourcefulness in people to build their future. In Part III, we focus on some of the issues pertinent to the goal of mobilising community leadership and supporting cooperation in community and we look at our experiences concerning the technical and economic side of project implementation, from our experiences in Croatia.

VII. Mobilising Community Leaders and Cooperation

Mobilising Community

Cities and municipalities after the war have difficulty building a network of social relations. Residents often have little awareness of the community in which they live. New systems are established which are different from those that existed before and perished in the war and transition period. New principles and practices are difficult to acquire due to the resistance towards the new as well as a lack of previous experience.

A multi-party system is developing alongside civil society with a variety of forms of engagement and participation of citizens. A political system is being established and interethnic relations are transferred to political confrontation and cooperation. State services and institutions (police, schools, municipalities, clinic, etc.) structure the relationships of individuals. Religious life is being restored.

Despite these parallel development processes, part of the community remains marginalised. There are issues concerning unemployment, the position of women and youth, conditions in which children are raised, and problems associated with post-traumatic stress disorder. Overall human capacities are modest. Older people are returning from refuge, younger people are not going back or are leaving again to follow better opportunities elsewhere. Some have permanently emigrated and only indirectly affect the communities that they have left. Some were isolated during exile, deprived of informal or formal sources of knowledge. On the other hand, some people, including young people, have gained advanced knowledge and experience.

Quality initiatives for the revitalisation of social and economic opportunities in these conditions are few and it is difficult to find allies and support for such initiatives. Even when support mechanisms are available, people may feel unable to make use of them.

In the Areas of Special State Concern in Croatia, the areas vary considerably from one another but what is always present is the need and aspiration of people to get something done: for themselves, for their families, for the community, and for society as a whole. There is also a desire for a sense of satisfaction, for success and personal recognition, and, of course, the inevitable battle for survival and well-being.

Leadership occurs in a variety of formal and informal forms, and carries the potential for community prosperity. In order for the community to realise its potential, support from outside may be needed. A task of the community mobiliser is to identify people who carry or can carry the progress. They may need support in overcoming psychological barriers to communication and to establish links and cooperation with others in the community. It is also important in the implementation of initiatives to support inclusion of those who are willing to participate but not necessarily lead.

A pragmatic assumption is that social and economic development are important for all citizens and that communities will achieve more if they use all available resources. However, in Areas of the Special State Concern this is usually not possible to implement, due to the inability to develop an inclusive approach in such communities.

Cooperation and partnerships are being introduced as a standard throughout our project, although as a value it is well-known to everyone. Willingness to cooperate is not expressed within the community and the path to realization of cooperation is not easy. The challenge to start something for the better in an environment of overall failure, is, fortunately, usually sufficient motivation for people to connect and begin communicating.

Mobilising communities is also based on willingness to cooperate between community representatives and mobilisers - professionals who enter the community and encourage it to change. On the other hand effective practical and theoretical preparation of those mobilisers is vital. This preparation includes building the capacity to recognise different levels of relationship, organisational and community dynamics and the various methods and skills needed to intervene.

In short, the mobiliser is an expert trained in the field of psychology – in communication and in working with trauma and conflicts. To this base, other knowledge and practical skills are added. These include coaching skills, knowledge of project cycle management, fund management, and knowledge of basic economic principles and trends. At the same time the mobiliser should be informed of socioeconomic and political aspects that are affecting the dynamics in the community.

The mobiliser should be capable of communicating their role and their job to the public because their work is, by its nature, public.

Traps for community mobilisers

Although the challenges are ongoing and variable, there are several basic risks that hinder and can threaten the work of a mobiliser.

Power and responsibility

Dynamics surrounding power and responsibility are a constant challenge for someone who is mobilising others in community. A mobiliser might feel 'powerful', because of his impact on community, and the success of local activities. In turn, community members may try to give up their responsibility and pass it on to the mobiliser. The profile that s/he acquires attracts responsibility for the implementation of local action. The community increasingly requires the mobiliser to work for them and s/he feels unsuccessful if things do not go as planned or successful if goals are fulfilled. Like every other assistant or counsellor, a mobiliser sometimes wants to become a saviour and do everything for their beneficiaries. If they fail in this regard, which is most often the case, they may begin to get angry or even "persecute" their beneficiaries, which in turn encourages anger in the beneficiaries themselves which causes them to "persecute" the mobiliser.

The risk in attempting to 'save' is that the community is not being mobilised, it's being made passive which is the exact opposite of the primary intention. Thus, an assessment is required of the degree to which beneficiaries need help – to indicate when it is necessary to do something for them, when to work together with them and when to let them do it on their own. Gradation of intervention is the foundation of good work in the community. Sometimes it is difficult to pinpoint the beneficiaries' capabilities. Excessive pressure may cause a reduction in motivation, which also happens when you offer the beneficiaries a job that is too simple and thus belittles them. With such dynamics the main purpose of working in the community is lost, i.e. encouraging responsibility and encouraging community members to develop new initiatives.

Prejudices and labelling of beneficiaries

Prejudices, generalizations and labelling of beneficiaries by the mobiliser are also part of the risk although mobilisers are trained to recognise such occurrences and conduct. This occurs usually when a community resists change, when there are difficulties in finding areas of common interest in the community and in finding willingness to cooperate. In those instances the mobiliser cannot achieve success, and the community members seem to be passive, incompetent, etc. What helps is to recognise and understand what is in the background, especially the collective criticism and pessimism that affects the mobiliser. One

needs a dose of optimism and faith that there is someone nearby who is prepared to take the initiative and realise change.

Closeness and distance and rank awareness

The level of closeness and distance in the relationship with beneficiaries is also being tested in daily contact. Sometimes it is necessary to use a more informal communication style in environments and with people who are skilful in private relations and communication. The risk here is that the relationship begins to be experienced as private, friendly, and thus the requirements of mutual work become less important.

Part of the risk is that community members may begin to feel an excessive gratitude towards the mobiliser – because it was he or she that enabled ‘the village to get the tractor’. A mobiliser with good insight into the different roles s/he occupies, as well as various aspects of his/her rank (social, psychological etc.) can prevent this dynamic.

Poor knowledge and respect for traditional roles and social relationships

Poor knowledge of traditional roles and social relationships can block community intervention. The mobiliser may be unaware of how the community looks upon him/her in relation to gender, education, marital status, age, appearance, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and other traits, and of how the community’s perceptions automatically influence his/her collaboration with the community. Although the mobiliser should clearly not hide these characteristics, with insight he or she will communicate in such a way to help prevent the hurtfulness of both the ‘nonspoken’ and ‘harshly spoken’

Routine

Routine can be a trap, which arises when it appears that the circumstances in the new community are similar to or the same as those in the previous one. Then similar strategy and methods are applied. But each system, e.g each community, has its own specifics and to repeat the success story elsewhere is not always possible. Creativity and sensitivity to the “vibrations” in the community are useful in choosing the appropriate method of intervention. The right choice is made by following community members in how they achieve solutions and mutual cooperation.

Siding only with progress, ignoring hopelessness in community and bond with the past

Someone with a great desire to mobilise a community has a tendency to skip or ignore the hopelessness in the community which is deeply connected to the polarisation of the past. Messages communicated may include– go on, let go of the past. Without taking into account the strong feelings of hopelessness, it is not possible to open the way to harmonious

community relations. Accepting his or her experience and reality leads an individual to the source of her or his power and to the power of the community. People who can face their hopelessness and difficulties become bearers of change – leaders in a situation or in a moment.

When attempting to mobilise a community there is a risk that some groups may be omitted as it is assumed that they will slow down development. The mobiliser must take care of this aspect of the work and must stand for their position. Otherwise, s/he will support the hopelessness that is repeated cyclically, and drains the energy for change.

The Division of Power in the Community

One way of looking at the distribution of power in the community is to consider the division between those who have, those who have little, and those who have nothing. Those who have are usually happy and avoid change, while change is needed in order to help those who have little or nothing. However, needing change does not necessarily mean being prepared for it. They are often overburdened with survival needs, passive and depressed. In between are those that are indecisive and fear losing what little they have.

Community mobilisation is primarily aimed at those who have little or nothing and at collaboration with others who have something. When we talk about war-affected areas it is difficult to claim that people who have everything or have a lot live there too. People in better positions, who have political power, more money, control of information, connections or legal status, tend to strive to retain the status quo. They tend to behave in the same way when it comes to the need for social changes and resolution of ethnic and other tensions and conflicts. Those who are in the majority and who have greater power may have difficulty accepting work related to conflict resolution. As the burden of war-affected communities is something that is shared by all within those communities, there's always scope for improvement. This is a good foundation for successful intervention in the community. Community members need empowerment to be able to take on more responsibility. The power increases in organised groups and collective force for change is achieved.

Techniques for introducing changes in the community²

Various techniques may be applied individually or in combination:

- development of services in the community (services in the home for the elderly, youth centre, etc);

² Concept presented in text is part of educational materials by Prof. Lee Staples, as part of seminar organised by USAID.

- advocacy – acting for others or in the name of others;
- citizen participation – participation in the work of various bodies, councils, etc.;
- non-formal education – education and workshops in the community to change attitudes, increase knowledge and strengthen skills;
- organising large public events – one-time activity that does not result in a new structure;
- organising of NGOs and citizen groups that maintain activities in the community.

Social Action and Community Development

In the process of community organisation two basic approaches have been used: social change and community development, which are not mutually exclusive. Which approach we choose depends on what we want to achieve in the particular moment. Both approaches can be used simultaneously.

- **A community development approach** is useful when the local authority acts as an ally or wants to participate in the desired changes, or when it is too dangerous to confront directly the local authorities. We help ourselves through community development and we look for the solution to problems within ourselves, within the community.
- **Social action** – creating problems (cases), through an assertive, but non-violent method of trying to draw attention to the issue and urge the authorities (or whoever is already responsible) to make the requested change. The basis of social action is to get someone else to do something that we think is necessary for community. The solution to a problem is seen as somewhere outside.

Citizen motives for participation in implementation of community projects

The basis of any intervention in the community is a willingness among members to participate in the work required to realise an idea or a willingness to join the initiative. Knowing the nature of motives and their importance in the circumstances of the community, helps towards inclusion of citizens. Living in a war-affected community also affects the personal motivation of its members to get involved in community activities:

Relationship with others - When arriving in a community that is restored and where, in most cases, there are few people, individuals need an opportunity to re-establish relationships with others. Particularly important are opportunities to connect with the so-called “Majority” –

the part of the community that has more power. More links to other community members contribute to social networks that can support the person and family.

Respect – After community members have experienced a loss of respect as refugees, they need both respect from their environment and self respect. The opportunity to take a leadership role or a more important role than they currently occupy, contributes to the level of self respect and respect from others.

Acknowledgement – publicly announced acknowledgment is proof of acceptance in the community. This is often one goal that project participants and leaders want to achieve.

Prizes – For some members, receiving a ‘prize’ is a concrete, tangible way of experiencing “gratitude” for their work and can be a motivating element. In an environment of poverty, receiving a prize may mean greater acceptance of the individual.

Position – People want to feel that what they are doing is needed and has a purpose. When working in war-affected communities it is often important to redefine every person’s position and define the role/s.

Results – Attainment of something concrete is necessary especially for people who, because of their poor socioeconomic situation, have difficulty in achieving visible and meaningful results in their surroundings. When they achieve something they feel strengthened.

When approaching the community it is important to carefully select relevant topics and to find an appropriate way to introduce them. The community will be interested if it hears mention of something that is important for its members. This must be something specific and concrete, i.e. something that people really care about. Also, it should be feasible so that the size of the problem does not discourage those in the community. Some specific topics, although they are part of a more abstract and broader story, give the impression to people that they can affect change. The biggest problem is to find what it is that will motivate people because sometimes people who are hopeless may say that they are not interested in anything.

Communication

Communication within an interest group has a tendency to remain in that environment. Interested people create relationships and cooperate. Often members of that group do not have insight into the multiple roles that they may occupy within the system. This lack of awareness amplifies the tension and sometimes leads to destabilization.

The system tends to remain in its familiar zone and is not open to other interested parties. This is how the majority of NGOs function in their first phase of development. Even if the results of the association’s work are visible to the community, there may be barriers to communication.

Citizen initiatives and citizens' associations in the areas of violent conflict strongly preserve their autonomy and have difficulty accepting the need for wider communication, including with their own community and its other subgroups. At the beginning they are not ready to open to the public and directly communicate with citizens. In community interventions, it is important to be aware of this so that local groups and associations are encouraged to step forward towards the public and are encouraged to conduct activities outside their "immediate circle".

Communication within the community requires that the system is ready to communicate with other systems. In small communities there is often a problem of having smaller numbers of people, which together with the existing polarisation further complicates communication and thus cooperation. Social capital in such conditions is very weak; there is no trust outside one's own interest group, there is no respect for common rules, and intimacy is achieved only within a small group. The main objective of intervention in the community is to enable more intense communication between systems, groups and individuals within the community, to seek areas of common interest and to create conditions for contact. In practice external intervention is confirmed as an effective tool because it breaks down barriers more quickly and encourages connections in a weakened community.

Communication outside the community is particularly important for deprived communities. Contact with other areas within the country and the international community is also very challenging. There is still a tendency towards isolation. Marginalisation is increased as a result. Through intervention in the community, people are encouraged to step out of their narrow framework, to present their results to others, to present their own competence, and thus to impact the community at a psychological level by demonstrating that despite all the difficulties, success has been achieved. Through communication, exchange with the wider community is achieved. This assists the positioning of those involved and creates opportunities for faster growth.

Cooperation

Does mistrust and trust among citizens, and difficulty in communicating about how to move from our past to the future, influence economic development, such as job opportunities, investments, building new premises and infrastructure? Can we together, as people and organisations, make a difference in the lives of our communities and our own families? How do divisions in communities based on ethnicity, religion, tradition and culture, war experiences and trauma, create barriers to the economic growth that is so much wanted particularly in Areas of the Special State Concern (ASSC)? Do we include, in development processes, the whole community? Why would we need to do that, and if so, would that slow down the process? Or do we leave aside somebody, consciously or unconsciously?

These questions, and the actual experiences and attitudes that we meet in communities are very important. How we deal with them as community mobilisers (consultants etc.) may, and probably will, have a crucial impact on the outcome.

Exclusion of marginalised groups and inefficient use of available local resources additionally burden war affected communities. In addition to ethnic or religious minorities other groups remain marginalised. Lack of good practices, clear strategies and values are critical obstacles. Facilitation of communication and exchange of good practices can greatly support groups and communities stuck in passivity and helplessness to move forward. Design and implementation of local projects, with promotion of cooperation, partnership and citizen participation, creates possible solutions to problems and gives new directions within local communities.

Cooperation / partnership

Often, it is said, with reference to human experience and in theory about organisational management in profit, non-profit and public sectors, that when we work together we can achieve much more than when we work alone as individuals and organisations. The term “synergy” is often used - which implies that partnerships bring possibilities to achieve more than the sum of what each partner organisation brings in the project. This idea may also be expressed symbolically as $1 + 1 = 3$, meaning that the partnership’s strength is more than the sum of the individual strengths, because through their relationship something more can be created that goes beyond the current frame and limitations of both partners and into the community in which they work. The idea is not new to organisations and individuals who have experienced successful, even small partnership projects, nor to any of us, who at least once in our lifetime has experienced the power of cooperation with another person, or within a group/team.

However, we do not (yet) meet such experience very often, and we need skills, attitudes and promotion of good practices in order to be able to establish cooperation and improve partnerships, for the benefit of ourselves and our communities. It is not easy, in any place in the world, to create sound cooperation and we can assume that it is often more difficult in war-affected and polarised communities. Yet the need and ability to work together, to cooperate and to create partnerships is an inherent aspect of human nature, just as it is our nature to get polarised and furious around conflicts and violence. This is valid for both war-affected and any other community.

What should a community mobiliser be aware of when s/he attempts to work on cooperation within a community? In order to establish cooperation between two organisations or social groups, perhaps just getting to know each other a bit more, sharing expectations and negotiating about responsibilities and outcomes may already be enough – the two sides can then start the natural process of creating a formal relationship. When these methods do not bring the desired outcome, or when we do not even attempt to do this because we sense in the “atmosphere” that there is no scope yet for establishing cooperation in a particular case, we need to become aware of the reasons and issues in the background of that community,

- among people, or between two organisations - that prevent them from getting together and working in cooperation for the benefit of their community. In order to do that we advise community leaders and mobilisers to organise “open forum” activities like those described thoroughly in Part Two, on forums. Such activities require a good deal of experience and skill from the community mobiliser and facilitators.

When the mobiliser does not have the experience or skill to facilitate, it would be already a great advantage for a mobiliser to become aware of existing tensions and polarisations between any marginalised groups and individuals, of the current socio-political environment, and of the “atmosphere” of a particular community / organisation. Sensing that atmosphere, and analyzing that impression may help a mobiliser to identify potential paths and strengths for cooperation and development. This can help the mobiliser to sense what a particular community / organisation is suffering from, even when the community has great difficulties to speak openly.

Isolated efforts cannot achieve the same result or impact as a joint effort, i.e. as two or more organisations or social groups working together towards a common goal, or within a particular project. In social sciences the term “social capital” is often used to refer to the level of networking among organisations and individuals in a particular community (society) working towards common good. Social capital is based on three elements: trust, complying with the rules, and personal relations i.e. social links. In previous chapters we emphasised the need to build a ‘relational infrastructure’, as the basis for reconstruction.

We should not forget that a need or motivation for a particular initiative / project within a community can exist in members of quite polarised groups, based on ethnicity, political orientation, age, gender, etc. The shared need and motivation for progress may help to restore / build communication and contact between divided sides. If the communication and recognised common needs give space to establish cooperation within a community, then such cooperation, even if quite formal and very small in terms of shared responsibilities, may have tremendous impact on the building / restoration of trust between divided sides in that community.

Cross-sector partnerships – difficult and yet so needed

In post-conflict societies, it is inevitable that there will be a lack of trust at various social levels. Fundamentally a lack of confidence (concealed or open) affects the daily lives of people – regarding with whom to socialise, enter into marriage, mark holidays, etc. Citizens generally lack confidence in their administration. Political parties also have shown a great deal of mutual mistrust. We have frequently seen, at a local level, ethnic divisions transferred into the formation of political parties and political arguments. Behind this stands the (democratic) idea that marginalised groups would have equal access to resources and could participate in the decision making process if they were politically represented. This practice, of course, creates a better position for minority groups, and opens up space for political dialogue and discourse between the majority and minorities.

Political discussion is needed to build confidence, especially among majority and minority populations at the local level, but this is not enough. Ethnic divisions can often be hidden

within political programmes and affect the dynamics of communication and decision making of political representatives. It is therefore very important that political and development programmes are aimed at betterment of all members of the community and that there is good communication between government and citizens.

Affected communities that suffer from fragmentation and lack of initiative need creative solutions that will mobilise available, even minimal resources. What is needed are models of cooperation within and outside the community – with its neighbouring municipalities and cities – as well as ways to secure funding and investment which is the key to community development. In such situations, it is important that political leaders and local authorities recognise the potential and power of the non-profit sector and its ability to make changes that may be small in financial terms, but, nevertheless, are significant.

Local NGOs and institutions should have the opportunity to realise their potential to achieve concrete improvements in the living conditions of their communities. By cooperating, civic Initiatives and governmental structures can use their individual advantages – among others flexibility and stability.

In Croatia, it is important to mention cooperation between war-affected areas and the rest of the country, which was not affected directly by war events. This is another important aspect of the development process. The way that organisations and communities from the areas hit hardest by war (Areas of Special State Concern) are perceived and how (if at all) organisations from the rest of the country establish cooperation with communities in the ASSC, may influence the confidence of war-affected communities to engage in development endeavours.

The difference in the rate of socioeconomic development between the Areas of Special State Concern and the rest of Croatia is currently growing – unfortunately with very few exceptions. Development of the communities in the Areas of Special State Concern creates different public perceptions and questions about needs and types of investment, approach, efficiency, etc. Comments made by those of us who do not live there - whether private or public - on issues of community development in these regions, often have features of belittlement, pity, criticism, hopelessness, and are reduced to the questions of how “they” can be helped (in ASSC). In this way, we fail to see the resources within those communities and thus repeat the same pattern as the direct war victims who have difficulties in identifying existing resources and their use. Our intention is benevolence towards them, i.e. that “we” can help. Communities affected by war, regardless of the suffering, have certain resources. They also need help to better identify and use these resources, both human and material, in a sustainable manner.

A recommendation for Croatia is to enable closer cooperation between profit and non-profit organisations from different regions and those in the Areas of Special State Concern. Instead of “helping cooperation” (i.e. occupying the role of the helper in the cooperative relationship), it would be far more useful to develop cooperation, through which all parties involved introduce different resources, conduct different parts of business, have different

responsibilities and ultimately benefits. These areas need solidarity from the rest of Croatia, but should also have the possibility of developing healthy businesses, and of collaboration and partnership relations in order to achieve more balanced and sustainable development in the country. One insufficiently used option, available through non-profit activity, is the building of partnership institutions which draw membership from different parts of Croatia and are related to the implementation and management of projects in the ASSC, and which seek to secure funding from external sources (competitions of national and international bodies). In our experience, exchange of experiences and examples of good practice are very useful and necessary within the ASSC, and between the ASSC and other regions.

This recommendation may be valuable for other post-conflict situations that have related dynamics concerning the relationship between regions more and less affected by war.

Focus on existing community links and networks

Barriers to socioeconomic development are closely related to psycho-social aspects of the coexistence of all ethnic groups and social groups, as well as to the problems of marginalization. To achieve social cohesion is to use all resources in the community, particularly to include all social groups, and foster cooperation and partnership building. This is one of the important preconditions for sustainable development.

As a result of community mobilisation one might expect a structure to be created to handle co-operation and development. This has not been our goal. We have respected different forms of existing links and cooperation (councils, committees, working groups etc.) and have particularly focused attention on individuals, their resources and their interconnections. We believe that cooperation has a more lasting impact on community life relative to the formation of a formal body that then would need to be constantly maintained.

Increased openness, confidence, readiness for cooperation and responsibility, is important capital. The experience of success provides a strong incentive to repeat a similar feat. New roles that have been developed by active community members need to be furthered, as do the experiences and skills involved in being able to take on the roles. In this way, conditions can be ensured for individuals who are willing to work together to change for the better.

Practical Issues in Community Mobilisation

How to choose a place to intervene?

What criteria are used to determine where to make a successful intervention for a local project? The focus may be 'humanitarian' or 'developmental'. A 'humanitarian'

focus is, "Let's help them because their capacity and resources are limited and their needs are great." A 'developmental' orientation is "Let's help them because they have the resources but are unable to move forward." Whether a humanitarian or developmental focus, there is also a need to process community trauma and persisting polarisations and conflicts which are blocking economic development. Both directions - humanitarian and development - have a deep justification, but also have different requirements during the intervention and have significantly different outcomes.

A Humanitarian approach - If a community with modest human capacity has been chosen for intervention, where the majority of people are older, without formal education, and burdened by poverty, it may not be possible to implement an ambitious local project, nor can we assume the effects to continue after the project ends. The justification for grant funding is also at issue if the project does not ensure a lasting impact. The challenge is therefore to ensure sustainability. A possible solution is to find a way of attracting additional resources from the environment which are naturally connected with the target communities. In practice this means finding organisations that can and want to cooperate with neighbouring communities and groups and connecting them in a common project in which roles are shared in accordance with each organisation's capacity.

Example: A group of farmers from small villages, involved with a wider range of food producers from the surrounding area, gathered in an agricultural cooperative. A local NGO from the nearby town supported development of agricultural cooperatives and maintained constant cooperation. Our role of community mobiliser involved finding people and helping them to establish their contacts and conditions for cooperation, and to further the development and implementation of achievable initiatives.

A Developmental approach assumes that the community has the social and natural resources required for future development. Depending on the circumstances, development can be focused on a small group or the whole community. Given the priority of survival and economic recovery, initiatives that lead to greater capacity for employment have been stimulated. In a large number of communities, strengthening social support is equally important, because of the emotional and social consequences of war, and ethnic and political conflicts. These conditions can easily lead to the marginalization of individuals and groups, and to blocks to economic development, so a focus on social inclusion is required, to process these conflicts and encourage new attitudes and cooperation.

Example 1: Groups of young people in rural areas around a large city that was severely damaged during the war were encouraged to intensify activism and increase their presence in their communities. They also received equipment and technical assistance for their projects, and were linked together in a unique project for young people which, eventually, held a large event in town. This project increased the responsibility of and the willingness of young people to work in the community, and stimulated their collaboration which had been weakened by the urban-rural and inter-ethnic polarisations.

Example 2: A women's NGO mobilised, educated and connected women from their rural surroundings, increased their capacity for self-employment and linked them in a common project. This project set an example and established connections with other women's initiatives in remote towns and cities that share the same goal, i.e. to increase the independence of women and strengthen families. Questions of ethnic tensions and traditional women's subordination in the family and society were addressed through economic activity based on the characteristics of the region.

Why encourage and support the work of citizen groups?

Civil society organisations and civic initiatives listen to the rhythm within a community and are able, freely, to devise a relatively quick and efficient solution. Public institutions and local governments which have a firm organisational structure often do not have close contact with citizens and thus receive feedback from the community at a slower rate. Since they are formal and usually procedurally heavy and influenced by politics, it is difficult for them to become an innovative and creative power within the community in the way that civic initiatives can. Within and through civil society organisations, representatives from minority groups may have greater power and influence in the public arena.

In polarised communities where divided social groups avoid mutual contact, the civil initiative can be a meeting place. An idea that gathers citizens together in associations usually relates to the common needs of the community for which citizen involvement has a visible and legitimate purpose. In order to realise common goals such as repairing a community centre, child care, or care for the elderly, communication barriers between divided groups are crossed.

In our model, we value leadership qualities such as the ability and willingness to guide others, assume responsibility, take initiative and take risks. The leaders we meet and seek in communities are usually informal, temporary or occasional leaders. These are people who use their capacities in order to change something, and this effort attracts others to work with them. In a community, it is natural that many feel overwhelmed or hopeless, due to their traumatic history and/ or living in exile. Yet, many take things into their own hands and work for the common good. The war-affected areas need this kind of power among citizens. For the development and restoration of communities, many innovative community leaders are needed in addition to the formal leaders. These may be people who have already been involved in similar ventures, and sometimes this opportunity to effect change challenges new leaders to come forward for the first time.

In order to identify the "right people" for new tasks, it is important to view the situation from all sides and gather the relevant information. In addition to assessing the type and strength of motivation, it is extremely important to check the capacity for addressing the situation, including values and attitudes and capacity for cooperation. Only with a favourable combination of all aspects can we expect a successful initiative that contributes

to the progress of the community. It is good to search for people to drive the local initiatives within groups that traditionally have less power in the community – who have strength but not opportunity – the young, women, unemployed people, and members of minority groups. In addition to the basic value that these groups deserve to be helped in order to be integrated into community life we trust that motives are strongest in people who often have fewer opportunities to express themselves and achieve their potential.

How to secure funding for the implementation of projects?

Financing of projects is mainly carried out through public tender which operates on a principle of transparency. This positive practice was established as a standard in Croatia, especially regarding grant funding from state, county or local budgets.³

In some cases, funds are granted for a proposed project without a public tender.

The donor in these circumstances has more freedom in decision-making and greater responsibility and risk. It is particularly important to avoid any possible chance of a conflict of interest.

In this project, public tender was not used to select applications. The basic argument for this approach is the need of the damaged community for progress and better utilization of human resources. Selection conducted through competition would not meet the basic function of mobilising the community but would create a standard that few could meet with the result that after being encouraged to participate, people would then not be chosen and thus become discouraged. Such an approach is certainly not appropriate in a situation where every person is important for the further development of the community. The possibility of conflict of interest can be avoided at several levels:

- in the community there is discussion with local stakeholders about selection of the local project implementing organisation;
- representatives of the donor participate in selection of the implementing organisation and creation of the project proposal;
- final selection of the project is made by the donor's review committee.

In the process of mobilising we find active implementers in the community who have the initiative and willingness to cooperate in the community. If they do not have enough knowledge and skill, this can be supplemented through various forms of technical assistance. The interactive relationship is achieved by increasing the technical knowledge and personal capacity to implement a serious contractual relationship with the donor. At the same time this strengthens the psycho-social facilities for the introduction of positive changes in a community burdened by loss and trauma.

The project implementation is arranged through the donation contract. A standard procedure is devised in which the project implementers learn or practice accountability for their contractual obligations. Through that they have a chance to change the mentality of

³ Code of good practice, standards and criteria for obtaining financial support for programmes and projects of NGOs passed by the Parliament 02.02.2007, for approving financial support from state budget organisations to implement programmes and projects that are of particular interest to the general public in Croatia.

dependence which may have been engendered during their period of exile or while they received humanitarian assistance. A change of identity is encouraged – from beneficiary to independent (social) entrepreneur. A change of attitude is also encouraged in relation to the person's expectations on the State. The level and type of intervention of the mobilising organisation must be adapted to the current needs and capacity of the beneficiary - whether to work for them, to work with them or to check in with, while they work alone.

The ultimate goal is to enable the community to meet itself, and find its own resources by way of its interactions. Community members are encouraged to become ready to initiate something feasible, rooted in the community and in cooperation with others.

Without facilitation of this capacity in community, new initiatives rarely occur spontaneously. Often there are no adequate responses to tenders and calls for project proposals. Sometimes it appears that it is always the same people or organisations that apply and then there is no further spread of ideas.

There may be no serious intention in relevant organisations/donors to provide the constant support needed for dynamic development. There is often insufficient awareness among public bodies or donor organisations about the need to consistently stimulate a dynamic development. On the other hand, donors and public bodies can choose to be facilitators of development. If this approach is taken, there is a chance that the donor will not be completely satisfied with the final result of the project. For the development facilitator, who may also be a donor, establishing cooperation and initiatives in the community may, of itself, be a good result.

In the model which we practice, the process has a high value, but we also work towards achieving a realistic goal. The experience of success also has its "therapeutic" purpose. Real and visible results encourage implementers to attempt to attract more people with similar intentions.

A donation is usually a welcome gift. Yet, there are a range of natural reactions whenever a donation is given. Many local stakeholders try to adapt to the conditions of the donor. Sometimes the community may not feel ready for a donation. Or, it may be sceptical and cautious, preferring its autonomy. Such reactions were widespread in the period immediately after the conflict, through attitudes and politics. The fact that the donation comes from outside elicits a number of different reactions including: pride; resistance to possibly feeling in a dependent or inferior position; welcoming and warmth; gratitude; ignoring; and excitement due to new opportunities.

The work is carried out with less resistance from the local community and is accommodated more readily if it is conducted by an expert or organisation acting as a mobiliser which is not from the same town or area. With a careful approach to mobilisation, communities and members of the community can accept needed changes, while retaining a sense of power or control. Sometimes communities are more welcoming of international organisations and

experts. On other occasions foreign assistance is not accepted because the mobiliser does not share a similar experience with the hosts. In our experience, the position of an organisation that comes from the same country but from “a more peaceful and less wounded part” has enabled successful intervention. We were sufficiently similar and sufficiently different.

Why use local projects in the process of mobilising the community?

People are easier to mobilise in relation to something concrete. The project must have some meaningful purpose and planned effective outcome. The project design requires understanding and monitoring of needs and resources. It is based on cooperation within the community and serves a more permanent change, primarily socioeconomic recovery. The project idea may arise from a person who has no formal role as leader in their community or organisation. A problem arises when communities are very impoverished, and may not have people who are readily interested or able to take part in new learning for a project. This is often the case in small rural communities in which the people who returned after the conflict are older and may have less formal education.

When mobilising a community, the role of the organisation is important, because the development of a new or existing organisation can impact the community permanently, even if it does not necessarily have concrete results in the short term. (The focus is on the role and value of the organisation in the community.) In contrast, focus on a project can enable the creation or implementation of an idea. (The focus is on its more immediate goal or objective.) Sometimes it is easier to realise an objective or goal, than to establish a new organisation.

Through implementation of the project, community members are encouraged to participate in various roles. They learn to transfer leadership skills - leadership that does not have to take place in political or professional structures. Project logic requires the development of new skills in order to implement the idea within the time and financial framework. Self confidence strengthens while the person develops and implements the project idea.

What initiatives are appropriate for community mobilisation?

Local initiatives are rarely focused on infrastructure due to the nature and cost of such infrastructure. In the process of community mobilisation, this is usually mentioned at the very beginning because the need for water, electricity supply and roads is certainly a high priority. On the other hand, the implementation task cannot be carried out by a group of enthusiasts. The volume of work and load of the action must accord with the capacities of both the donor and the implementer. With regard to unemployment and the need for economic recovery, after infrastructure, the second priority of communities tends to be economic initiatives. It definitely deserves attention but also care in development of the project idea.

The experience of socialist planning resulted in a specific view of work opportunities. People always expected new work positions to be within an employing organisation but rarely would endeavour to develop an entrepreneurial idea. Thus, initiating a spirit of entrepreneurship is most useful for socioeconomic revitalization. When mobilising the

community, active members are encouraged to think in that way and are informed and taught about the possibilities. The most sensitive part is to choose an idea which is both realistic and sustainable and which respects human and natural resources. The choice of direction is also not easy because very often there is no developed strategic or operational plan for economic recovery of that area.

How to ensure visibility in the community, society and the international context?

Mobilisation of the community means its awakening and networking. Actions should be visible and accessible to the various groups and individuals. Initiators of changes in the community sometimes avoid being visible. There are a number of reasons for this, some of which are psychological e.g. fear of the reaction of the environment, loss of existing position, failure, or loss of energy in discussions with the community.

Some actions are carried out in small groups of like-minded people, and therefore need support in this, as well as support for broader communication. Due to difficult communication, it is often necessary to encourage local project implementers towards greater openness and communication. On the other hand, it is necessary to work with all other community members so that they are more open and thus potentially assist those who are active. Through involving other community members, the space is created for mutual encouragement and synergy, which, in turn, supports a healthy dynamic in the community and society.

When communication between diverse parts of the community is supported and the community becomes more cohesive and communicates more effectively, then communication tends to not get blocked. It can extend further like expanding circles. It is important that successful actions do not remain isolated endeavours in one small village, but that they influence the social and economic dynamic in the country and beyond.

To achieve these objectives community members should use different channels of communication and should communicate with the public by means of all available media. The mass media is a generally known and available channel, however, it is also sometimes an obstacle to the local project implementers. The task for mobilisers is to help to overcome such obstacles, but also to help with adopting new methods and techniques for addressing the wider environment - including public relations, by using public media, and electronic media.

What we wanted to achieve

In the background of the range of methods, techniques and reflection that we use in establishing and implementing this model in and with the communities, there are values, professional techniques and investment in common learning and openness to change. Our expectations from our joint work (with partners, donors, colleagues, beneficiaries, friends) reflect a broad interest for society and humanity to develop its capacity for resolving conflict, community recovery and for preventing future violence.

In relation to community mobilisation, but specifically in relation to implementation of local projects, we have focused on particular outcomes:

- An active and motivated group of community members, ready to cooperate;
- Established cooperation of two or more organisations / institutions within the community and beyond;
- Design and implementation of socioeconomic initiatives and projects that were sustainable after support ended;
- Greater knowledge and willingness of community members to undertake and implement projects;
- Inclusion of deprived communities in the socioeconomic trends at home and abroad;
- A greater interest in the rest of society for revitalization of war-affected areas;
- Establishment of channels of communication with others in the community – both the closer and wider community.

In the area of psychosocial interventions, the outcomes we sought are:

- Establishing of contacts, which did not exist previously, with community members – particularly representatives of groups which participated in the violent conflict;
- Creation of space for the opening of the painful issues in controlled and safe conditions – with expert facilitation;
- Ensured participation of community members representing the diversity within the community and society;
- Nurturing a culture of dialogue and conflict resolution;
- Establishing contact between the polarised positions in the community and society as a precondition for coexistence;
- A chance for recovery and increased efficiency of community members in the development processes.

Each of the expected changes has been clearly manifest to varying degrees, and sometimes in life-changing ways, impacting communities. All of us involved have received a profound stimulus for our personal and professional lives.

In addition to those expected outcomes, other changes occurred that teach us that we can be more ambitious in setting our goals:

- An informal network of active and capable grassroots leaders who support each other was established at a national level;
- Programme participants developed a strong interest in personal empowerment and learning to work in the community;
- Local leaders increased their skills and ambition for faster and powerful transformation of relationships in the communities where they live;
- A positive attitude and respect for achievements in small communities was created.

VIII. About Projects: Experience from the Field

Identifying Key Players

From the moment the community in which the project will be implemented is known, initial activities begin aimed at creating conditions for successful implementation.

The first step is to identify key players in each community:

- are there civil society organisations?
- have there ever been projects implemented previously?
- what is the history of the presence of various donors?
- what is the demographic and political structure?
- what is the ratio of political power?
- who is able and willing to implement the project?
- who can best link the various parties required for the successful introduction of changes into the community?

Associations are generally the first choice when planning the implementation of the project. Their form of organisation, operation and experience in implementing the project cycle, and often their attitude, are the best guarantor of the quality and for success of implementation.

In Croatia, associations with the status of 'Areas of Special State Concern' had contact with foreign donors, who first introduced the culture and working mode that has become the standard today during project implementation. The ideal partner for this kind of work is an organisation that has knowledge about the process, motivation for change, and ability to respond quickly and contribute on a voluntary basis. If, in certain areas, there is no association or for any reason the association is not the best partner, it is necessary to find another organisation that might be the project implementer.

In addition to finding project implementers in NGOs, we find project implementers in farmers' cooperatives and schools. In many cases they do not have all the necessary knowledge and experience so they may require more assistance in all phases of implementation: in the initial stage of drafting objectives and results, during the implementation in the form of

technical assistance, and in the closing phase of the project and preparation of reports (financial and descriptive).

Cooperatives have a different operational mode and a strong role in the community. Therefore they are an important place of intervention. Schools are very important because they may be the only point of contact for different social groups. Yet, schools generally have little experience in implementing projects of this type, so they require adjustment, flexibility and motivation in the principle and the teachers. Although project implementation is not usually part of their primary function, they can greatly enhance their role regarding education and child development.

The positive side of the involvement of cooperatives and schools is that these organisations are more stable, longer term and more sustainable than associations. Unlike associations, schools and cooperatives approach a project as an adjunct to their primary role which secures their existence.

Project Ideas - What is Needed in the Community

After the selection process of implementers of the project, the next step is to define project ideas to correspond with the needs of the community. Since each donor organisation has its own goal and idea regarding the purpose of investing money, it is necessary to adequately match the wishes and needs of project implementers from various communities to those of those donors. During the implementation of this programme, donors mostly wanted to support partnership projects that have an underlying economic logic. The idea was to initiate changes in the community working on economic development (agriculture, tourism, employment – mostly self employment). Our task was to help people in the field to start small projects in that direction.

In order to use resources most effectively, new projects should be within the framework of existing activities. Often people from the field do not perceive the broader picture and the impact they make on their community. Mainly our task was to raise awareness and clarify the impact of project activities. Sometimes only a small intervention is required within the project logic in order to define substantial changes and to highlight the impact.

Areas of Special State Concern, unfortunately, are not yet competitive with other areas. If they are treated equally on the market as it is now established, they will not be able to compete. Their starting positions are much worse than that of regions in the country that were not affected directly by the war and they need more help.

Our approach was different from the approach of most other donors. The common procedure is to apply to publicly announced tenders for funding. The way is clear, transparent, and has many advantages. However, it implies well-organised associations, professional work, standards and experience that many do not have. In this way, we have what is called in nature “the survival of the fittest”. The economic logic of this way of doing business is also

clear as the market regulates the competition. The best projects and ideas go forward, and that makes sense. However, there is another side to the story. Some areas are much worse off than others for various reasons, relating to, among other things, war, nature, demographics, sociology. Survival of the fittest is not always appropriate. Survival of the most vulnerable is also important. If we want to maintain life in these areas and ensure that they become suitable for return and habitation, support on all levels is required.

This programme was implemented in a way that the funds were intended for a particular community, and within that community we were supposed to find individuals or groups who were able to create and implement the project. In that process they were given all the assistance that they required from the donor.

From the moment when implementers were identified, our team played an active role in the process of designing and implementing projects. In that way the selection of the optimal goal was assured as well as maximum output in project implementation. Activities are arranged according to needs and opportunities. Budget items are analysed to achieve maximum utilization of resources and costs are designed to be as simple as possible and are monitored.

This kind of intervention is possible only with a high level of donor involvement and a team responsible for monitoring implementation. In practice it meant a lot of field work, interviews with individuals from many different organisations, as well as drawing on previous relationships and contacts that were achieved through a long period of presence in the field by our organisation and the donor.

The initial phase is always the most sensitive, especially as we do not want to create disturbance with our intervention in the vulnerable areas where the projects are being implemented. If we cannot find a way to include “both (all) sides”, the project can be perceived as benefiting only one side. Then we do not bring improvement into that community but may create additional burdens.

Project Implementation

After defining the project idea, developing activities, the budget and establishing cooperation with other stakeholders in the community, a cooperation agreement is signed.

What follows is the acquisition of goods, services, payments to suppliers, and the implementation of activities. At this stage, implementers of activities generally did not need additional support. With a well defined and balanced budget, and selection of most the favourable bidder from among the offers, the project is implemented according to an established plan. It is necessary to pay attention to documenting the activities (noting media coverage, evidence of activity and the number of participants, and especially photographic documentation). Implementers of local projects often do not attach importance to and often miss catching

the most significant moments that can be of great importance to the significance of the project and the value that such documents have as a good example to others.

Project Closure

At this stage local practitioners who have no experience from previous projects often are not adroit. If all funds are not expended (for a variety of objective and subjective reasons) there is still a possibility before the end of the project to reassign funds to a different budget line. In order to know the condition and the rhythm of spending it is necessary to monitor the dynamics of spending and thus have time to predict possible outcomes. In that way, the budget spending is regularly monitored and all finances will be spent as planned. The donor is also open to timely and purposeful reassignment of funds.

Upon completion of the project, practitioners are required to provide a narrative and financial report. A narrative describes the course of implementation, results, successes, etc., and a financial part includes a list of expenses, and financial documents that support expenditure.

Financial tracking and administration is always the most sensitive part of work and represents the greatest burden to implementers. It is therefore important when drafting the budget to simplify the costs, and to group and adjust the administrative capacity of the implementing organisations. In many cases, management of projects was undertaken voluntarily. It was almost a rule that project organisations did not have employed people working on the project.

Respecting this fact, the number of problems within the communities from which these people come, and the frequent personal difficulties of implementers, it was necessary to find a balance between requiring discipline (which will also be required in all future projects and situations) and adapting to their specific conditions. The procedure is supposed to be designed not to overwhelm the limited capacity of small, local organisations and thus destroy the motivation for change. Support is supposed to be continuous in all parts of the process.

As well as providing technical assistance, it was necessary to hear and understand the human and personal challenges people encountered as a consequence of implementing local projects.

Project Cycle Management

Project management is a skill of planning, organising and managing resources to achieve intended objectives. The biggest challenge is to achieve the planned goals within the constraints that we have when starting a new project. The main constraints are: the scope (area), time, and money. Our task is to find the best way to use obtained funds to achieve planned goals. The scope of the project is the extent of the work to be undertaken to achieve the project's specific goals. The time constraint of the project is what makes the difference between everyday activities and agreed, planned project activities that must be performed within the agreed timeframe. Projects usually embody constraints and risks related to financial resources, the manner of implementation or expected results.

Stages in the project development:

Project Initiation

The process of initiation determines the nature and scope of the project. If this step is not performed well, it is unlikely that the project will be successful in meeting its goals. The key mechanism that is required at this stage is to know (understand) the community in which the work is undertaken. The initial phase should include a plan that will include the following:

- Assessment of needs related to the goals that can be achieved
- Knowing what is currently happening in the field
- Analysis of the expenses required related to the benefits of the project implementation (cost—benefit analysis)
- Analysis of stakeholders, beneficiaries and the capacity of the project team

Project plan or idea stage, planning and design

After the initial phase, it is now necessary to plan the project in detail. The main goal is adequate planning of time, costs and resources so as to make estimates of the amount of work and possible risks that could arise during implementation. Each incorrect evaluation in the planning stage can significantly affect the success of the implementation of project activities, and thereby achievement of the results and goals of the project.

The planning process consists mainly of the selection of the project team, agreement on work method, defining activities to be carried out, estimates of necessary resources for implementation of activities, estimation of the time required (labour) and funds for necessary activities, drafting of implementation, drawing up the budget, estimates of risks and possible difficulties in implementing activities, finalising the project and obtaining formal permission to begin project implementation.

Also, activities such as agreement on cooperation, communication and information exchange, identification of roles and responsibilities within the project team, are an integral part of this phase of project development.

Project implementation

The implementation of the project consists of a number of processes necessary for successful implementation of activities that we have determined and by which we want to achieve our goals. The implementation encompasses coordination of people and resources, and performance of activities according to the defined plan in order to realise the goals in a timely manner and within budget.

Supervision and project management

Activities undertaken to oversee the project implementation process in order to identify potential problems on time and work with them promptly and effectively, are called monitoring. The significance of monitoring is that project implementation is followed in real time (at all stages of implementation) and so we can see any potential differences between the activities and the results planned in the project. In this way we can predict, on time, any changes in the duration of activities (eg, delayed implementation of some activities, the need for cancellation or reallocation of certain activities along with resources related to their implementation).

Monitoring includes:

- Control of execution of current project activities according to plan;
- Monitoring the changing values (how much is left / how much money we have spent, how much work is done, results achieved within a certain period of time, whether we should do more in line with the expected plan at this stage in the project, etc)
- Identifying those activities that should change because of perceived differences, and identified risks. What activities and measures we can undertake to return “back” to the original plan, if we deviated from it.

During the implementation of any project, the amount of work may change. Change is a normal and expected part of the process of implementing the project. Changes may occur as a result of subsequent unforeseen adjustments that need to be made. They may be the result of external conditions, availability of materials or machinery necessary for timely performance, or dependencies on suppliers and other contractors. All changes within a project should be documented including adaptation and changing of activities. Each donor requires documentation of the need for and a detailed description of changes in the agreed plan. Any change requires a reassessment of goals and results. If the required (or inevitable) changes are significant, predicted results can be at risk, and thus the justification of investment in the project.

In order to sustain all project processes it is necessary to have the support of end users, to work on removing barriers and to monitor the implementation of activities and the managing of spending funds.

Project completion

Completion of the project implies formal acceptance of financial and narrative reports. Administrative activities related to the project completion relate to the filing of all documents related to project implementation, as well as accompanying material that demonstrates the success of the implemented activities, lessons learned and changes made to the community. The final stage involves completion of all activities, including all financial transactions as well as all anticipated contractual obligations between implementers and donors.

Responsibility learning

Community mobilisation includes work on local projects. In addition to changing attitudes, and developing skills and knowledge, it develops responsibility. It is crucial for the viability of an idea, for communities and society, and for the benefit of every person. The person implementing a local project learns how to really be responsible for their idea and life mission - learning how to fully complete it. On a different level s/he learns to be responsible for a job or a contract with the donor: the implementation of activities, meeting deadlines, quality, finance, insurance, all financial and administrative and other evidence. Thus s/he becomes responsible for the functioning of the team that carried out the project and the overall cooperation and adopts the responsibility for relating with the community and to the public. Finally, s/he accepts responsibility for their contribution to community life and the development of society.

All aspects of responsibility are often a burden and sometimes seem daunting. But with persistence and external assistance it gradually becomes part of experience. By realising and repeating successes, responsibility enters into a deeper sphere of influence on behaviour and manifests further in any new job and thus optimism to the challenges of life. Responsibility becomes part of the personal / organisational code of ethics, it has our consent and full acceptance and continues to operate without previous obstacles.

Local Projects

The examples that we show come from the towns and municipalities where the programme was implemented through support to local initiatives as well as psychosocial interventions. Each community has developed and implemented its own local project and thus enhanced co-operation or tested the space for future cooperation.

During a period of four years, 40 communities were selected based on difficulties in development and / or polarisation in the community. Communities were identified by representatives of UNHCR, in collaboration with their partners and associates. Each had its own specifics, but trends appeared that were common in similar areas. We present some of them:

Places of return and settlement

Kistanje, Donji Lapac, Gracac, Udbina, as well as many others are places of return of local populations, mainly Serbian, and settling of other representatives from the community - mainly Croats from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Kosovo.

Their communities are not being renewed, but built again and thus become a meeting point of diversity. However, people of different ethnic origin and cultural heritage share the same desire to be perceived for their values, accomplishments, and identity. Above all, they want a good quality of life, security for their families and opportunities for their children.

What is shared are natural resources and other characteristics of the region. Seeking a solution and path to their goal they discover the benefits offered to them: they are in the vicinity of tourist locations and interesting parts of the region which are rich with natural and cultural values. They connect their strengths - the vitality of the immigrants, who are mostly younger - with the experience and material resources of the local population.

Obstacles to development are tensions in the relations between the hosts and the immigrants, personal relationships (conflicts) are transferred to the roles in the community, the political positions of individuals and groups, the lack of real opportunities for communication and collaboration. Tensions are maintained in conditions of economic stagnation, unemployment and poverty.

Local projects in these areas resulted from joint creative solutions representing different groups in the community. They are an integrating factor around which different groups and forces could gather. In Kistanje, a traditional crafts and souvenirs fair was organised and a promotional film was made about opportunities for tourists in the town and the region. In Gracac, female entrepreneurship was encouraged and a space for sales and exhibiting was opened in a traditional wooden house near the famous Cerovacke caves. In Donji Lapac, through the efforts of various government organisations and volunteers, a traditional house was restored, which is an important point of interest for tourists. In Udbina, the promenade area was restored in the areas visited by tourists and the work of a school cooperative was encouraged.

Small rural communities with mostly older residents

Kasic, Krupa, Jagma and many similar environments suffer from a lack of young people who have difficulty returning because they see no opportunities for prosperity. Older people eventually lose strength and fail to initiate development. Reconstruction of such a community necessarily implies the restoration of agriculture. In addition to human resources, machinery is needed as well as coordination of work and access to the market.

Various resources that such environments have require various forms of support. Some of them acquired agricultural machinery. Others received help to establish an agricultural

cooperative or association. A third category did not have the resources to organise themselves and to go on the market, so they received support in connecting with younger and more vital groups and communities in the area. Associations with experience helped with writing proposals to donors and with organisation. Cooperatives opened stalls for sale of products and organised the collection of products or the crop. Networking based on interests (one with the land and the other with strength and mobility) led to the creation of trust and new forms of mutual support.

Young initiators of the economy

A specific example is the initiative of young people organised in an association of youth to revive the production of milk in their town (Negoslavci). In the implementation of their ideas they involved an agricultural cooperative and the municipality, and the end result was a modern and equipped milk collection centre and increased sale of the milk of local producers. In this environment the unfavourable circumstances were that the infrastructure and the economy were war-damaged and that the population was predominantly Serbian, a minority group within the total population of the country. Although it is a community where most members are of the same ethnic group, in order to initiate positive changes, energy and enthusiasm was needed. The Youth Association managed to mobilise the community and gain more power and responsibility. In many places the role of young people is marginalised because the older individuals hold positions of power.

A stronger organisation supports the work of smaller NGOs

Experienced NGOs from Knin, Gracac, Korenica, Vukovar, Beli Manastir in several different projects, carried the initiative in a 'cluster' style. A 'cluster style' refers to independent organisations acting together in a coordinated and cooperative way'.

Organisations with more experience, linked their experience in project management, human resources, and influence in the community with the beneficiary groups/ small organisations which work directly with other beneficiaries or in other communities. The project lead had a responsibility that was shared with partner organisations. They were the generators of change that was passed on to others. An example from agriculture is the 'agricultural machine circle' in the Lika region where producers of potatoes from several places were connected. The project agreed to use existing equipment and obtain equipment that was needed to complete production and strengthen market access.

An example of working with youth organisations in the vicinity of Vukovar, which was led by stronger associations in Vukovar, resulted in a greater capacity of youth organisations to work in their area and a shared impact on local / regional government and the public in the city and the county. Young people were given the necessary equipment, training and conducted a campaign in their community. They implemented a joint action - a skateboarding competition along with a concert of young bands, which attracted young people from other cities and countries. In Beli Manastir women's organisations of various

ethnic groups gathered around the two larger partner organisations and received support for the production of souvenirs along with an educational workshop and the involvement of members. They presented their work to the public through a well attended public event.

Community centres

Repair of community centres in areas of return after major destruction and exodus represents an opportunity for revitalisation or rebuilding of social relationships. Reconstruction of centres becomes a literal clean-up of ground zero and coming face to face with deep trauma. These reconstructed premises become places of meeting, learning, informing, celebration and mourning. These are the only places in a community where you can seat a larger group of people. They are also neutral spaces in which minority and majority, marginalised and dominant can work together to contact and work on trust and coexistence. Project implementers were village boards in Kinjacka, Bestрма, Barilovic and Okucani, as well as councils of national minorities and farmers' cooperatives in other places.

Women's initiative and entrepreneurship

Women in communities that are being revitalised and re-built work on many levels, but often they hold a dominant role in the family. The rural environment in particular demands from women a permanent presence in homes and on farms. Unemployment and patriarchal relations additionally keep woman out of social trends.

An opportunity for social inclusion and self-employment can be realised through engagement in traditional crafts, souvenirs and food production. Often such tasks can be performed at home, along with other obligations. In addition to being present in the community and earning income, women tend to emphasise the importance of maintaining the cultural identity of their community or group by traditional lace work, weaving, making useful and decorative items, preparing meals, dances and rituals. Manufacturing and services in tourism are an opportunity to access the market. Projects that were supported lead in that direction. Apart from equipment and materials, women's initiatives were enriched with new knowledge in order to obtain a position and placement of goods in the market. They were also encouraged to create new contacts and networks of support for sustaining initiatives and to establish contact with the broader social environment. Successful projects were implemented in Gracac, Licko, Petrovo Selo and Beli Manastir.

Public institutions are implementers of Initiatives

In Donji Kukuruzari, Udbina and Beli Manastir, schools were actively involved in the implementation of local projects. Schools in places of return and settlement are often the only meeting place for people of different ethnic origin, social status and experience related to war events. Besides their educational role they take part in reviving the community, which eventually contributes to their primary role – of education. State institutions have a reputation within society, which increases the possibility of impact on the community. The quality of the project that is being implemented often depends on the enthusiasm of the people who run it, because engagement far exceeds their regular duties. Projects that are supported are equipping student cooperatives and education for democratic citizenship.



Part Four: Feedback and the Future

IX. Comments from Forum Participants

I attend courses organized for soldiers who suffer from PTSD, for people who are not coping with the chaos of civilian life... I received an invitation from the Centre for Peace, Nonviolence and Human Rights -Okučani to participate in the seminar organized by Association "Mi" on the theme "Building sustainable communities in the aftermath of war." Since I was a refugee and veteran from 1991 to 1995, I saw, heard and experienced a lot of ugly things that human beings do to one another.

The theme of the seminar sounded interesting...The first day I felt disoriented... I expected something else...As the seminar participants presented themselves I realised that many were highly educated people - doctors, professors, people who speak foreign languages. And me, with three years of high school, a peasant from Slavonia, how did I get here?

The second day I felt differently. I saw that we were all burdened by common problems of how to live a normal life without stress and how to help ourselves and others. I believe that the third eye of my soul is opening for me- it pierces through me, bringing light to my bad as well as good qualities, my fears, my hatred, my love. I want to be on good terms with myself - if I manage that I will be on good terms with everything around me. If I cannot live at peace with myself, how can I live in peace with my surroundings. I say this, so that others might understand why I place emphasis on the person, the individual.

The third and fourth day showed me that I'm not alone and that my problems are not the biggest. These great and strong people who opened their souls and hearts in front of the entire group and shared their feelings with all of us have taught me that we need to share our grief, misfortune, and goodness, one's love with others.

I have learnt this and I am grateful for this.

* * * *

I ponder the question of the feeling of responsibility. Now I know that when something bad happens I cannot say, "That does not concern me. I do not think like them. I didn't do it." Responsibility should be felt. No guilt if we are not to blame, but responsibility. Responsibility obligates and motivates us. Only now I understand that I assume that responsibility. I am aware that I really feel like a member of the community. Because of it I invest and speak. Because of community I always stop and look at the people around me. Who is going to change our reality, if not ourselves?

* * * *

Responsibility - an unfamiliar and complex concept. Ambiguous. Penetrated into me during the seminar like a wet knife into a large birthday cake. The cake – that's me. I did not actually expect such pleasure when someone cuts you up like that and serves you to others. The feeling of togetherness, of a sense of community is a feeling of responsibility for others, and for yourself. No one is spared. There are no people on the sidelines. We are all in it.

* * * *

First, I am happy that I had the honour and pleasure (speaking of both forums) to spend several days with so many wonderful people. Everyone, like me, came to do their best to change themselves, the people around them, and change the atmosphere of intolerance, hatred and mutual disrespect that has been present for so long to its opposite. We aimed to build civil society, a legal state and democracy as a pre-condition for a happy life and safe environment.

Second, as a lawyer by profession, I learned to look from other perspectives at the same problem. Then, using other methods of solving the same problem. I then realised that the seemingly contradictory views about the same issue, after much discussion and processing opposing opinions, reach a new dimension. Opinions are not so much opposites - just the approach is different from the other point of view.

Third, I am immensely happy that I saw the presence of young people at this seminar. I saw parents who were with their children, with a shared worldview, worldview and inspiration to actively build a world of tolerance and mutual respect - and I was convinced that the future of our children is really going to be much better..

* * * *

I do not mind that all of us, especially parties in conflict require a "third party" facilitator. We needed this forum precisely so that a "third party" points out how we feel and what we are experiencing.

They clarified and illuminated things to us, very frankly and personally, without patronising - making our feelings universal, human, comprehensible and acceptable. They shared them with us, and at that moment we were no longer alone. We were not 'the Balkanians' with their 'Balkan' urges. We need these 'third party' facilitators. This does not mean that they are taking responsibility for us, but rather they bring objectivity, while subjectively participating in these issues with us.

It is easier to deal with myself when my feelings, thoughts and attitudes become understandable to others, and eventually accepted. I like to be part of something that is good.

* * * *

I think my greatest gain has been a sense of involvement and participation in all that is happening around us. Participation in life. Participation in the country where I live.

For a very long time I had the feeling that everything was going on well beyond and above my reach, and that I had no control over it. It is others who lead in politics. It is others who start wars. It is others who make mistakes and I just have to suffer all of this.

This project enabled me to be part of life again, in a way that is acceptable to me - not at the level of politics, which tends to be alienating, but at the level of interacting with actual living people. This project enabled me to find out what patriotism is for me: it is not ideas, not history or geography, not silly songs, nor the flag. Patriotism for me means to participate in the life of my country through knowing people from Erdut, Dubrovnik, Knin, Pakrac, Zagreb and Glina, people who I can communicate with and interact with... I met and grew to love so many people. I did not always understand them, but I love them anyway and watch them with admiration as they wish to contribute. And I am extremely happy that I have discovered them.

I've learned that there is an important difference between the feeling of collective guilt and collective responsibility and that we are all responsible for activities in the community, be it an organisation where we work, or the country in which we live.

X. A Culture of Conflict Facilitation and Community Involvement

Creating a Culture of Conflict Facilitation

The tendencies in all of us to become emotional, reactive, fired up, or ‘blasé’ need to be understood in context to how whole societies can be readily manipulated and swept up into the wide-scale polarisations that lead to violence.

Society needs to foster attitudes, methods and structures to enhance awareness of the part that individuals, neighbourhoods and organisations play in perpetuating violent conflict or in preventing it.

We need to create a culture where it is normal and possible to facilitate conflicts and to become aware of how we each make a difference at different levels throughout society.

Linking Conflict Facilitation and Community Development

Creating a culture of conflict facilitation can go hand in hand with a culture of community involvement in the reconstruction and development of community.

When conflict is facilitated, it can decrease and transform tensions and prevent renewed cycles of destruction. When conflict is facilitated, it also leads to creativity and change. It accesses the creativity and potential in whole communities to transform the past and move forward. It supports a changing world-view in which everyone is responsible and everyone is needed. It supports a worldview in which individual leadership and initiative, as well as relationships, teamwork and networking are needed for community recovery and development.

Civil Society and Communication Between Sectors

Over the past ten and twenty years, the world has witnessed a great surge of activity from ‘civil society’. In post-conflict societies, large and small NGOs activate local communities, and support people to get involved in shaping their future. Civil society is not only a central

feature of democracy building, it is linked to the potential of creating a culture of conflict facilitation and violence prevention. This movement of civil society could become more vital and make far better use of resources by way of facilitating the respective contributions, differences and viewpoints among organisations.

Also needed is facilitation between civil society and the government and business sectors of society. This includes facilitating awareness around the power dynamics that perpetuate conflict between these sectors. It is natural that power dynamics occur, but it is both essential and possible to build structures and a culture of addressing these.

In this handbook, we have referred to an emerging relational infrastructure, in which the tensions in society can be processed and transformed, creating the depth of relationship and community needed to work together. This could become the 'norm'. Just as any team knows that they need to meet among themselves in order to be effective, individuals, organisations and sectors need to work together to process the difficulties they all are facing, in order to maximise resources.

Mobilising the Resourcefulness of Community

There is a need for local partners and understanding of the unique needs and resources in community.

To make a difference to a community or region, you need to respect and support local resourcefulness and initiatives, with an attitude that fosters and mentors initiatives and the people making them happen.

It is a worthwhile reminder, time and again, to learn about the field that you are trying to support. Each situation will always be unique, and so it is never possible to simply bring in a packaged intervention. Effective support for community conflict facilitation, community networking, and projects for economic recovery come by way of making direct contact and relationship within local communities and local partners. The following are guidelines that can be applied according to the unique nature of the situation.

Outreach and diversity for participation in projects and forums

One of the most important things when trying to support the innate resourcefulness of community is to focus on outreach and communication that includes diversity.

Diversity is essential in respect to ethnic-national background and war experience. It is also important to include and communicate with people from different professions and job positions, sectors (whether they work in civil society or government), and hierarchy (whether they are in programme development or a part of grassroots initiatives). Other

aspects of diversity that are essential include religion, gender, sexual orientation, education, disability, health, age and more.

It is important to also include different political groups. We learned in Croatia that interethnic tensions which persisted over the years often transferred to the apparent polarisation of political parties.

Attitudes and special considerations

Your worldview will govern your attitudes and actions concerning how to communicate and be of support to communities in need. If you believe that all viewpoints are needed for community to resolve conflict and flourish, then special attitudes and considerations are needed when communicating with people and inviting them to participate in activities.

People need to know how they will benefit from being involved, but they also need to know that they are needed and appreciated in their viewpoint and in their contribution. It is useful to approach people with an attitude of trust and belief in their capacity to make a difference. This is more than just having a positive manner in communicating with people. It is an awareness based in experience that for transformation to happen, everyone is needed.

People perceive when outreach is impersonal or is really addressing them. A formal flyer sent without personal contact will not do what a personal message will. Special care and repeated invitations may be needed for groups that are usually marginalised, so that they know they are respected and valued participants in the event and that they will be welcome in their viewpoint and safe.

It is also important to realise that some people will respond to an invitation that is geared towards increasing cooperation and community change. Others may be satisfied with the status quo, and less interested in the need for change. It is usually those with the most power or rank in a community who are most satisfied with the status quo. It is therefore essential not only to make special efforts to reach marginalised groups, but to make special efforts to invite and motivate those who are in a majority or a stronger position in society, that they feel welcome and realise they are valued and necessary in the community interactions.

Community resources

Encouraging awareness and management of resources in the community:

When material, cultural and human resources remain neglected and abandoned, people need an incentive to re-assume responsibility, and to develop their personal capacities and collaboration. It is essential to recognise that areas with reduced capacity due to the destruction of war need to be given the chance to rebuild.

By way of designing and implementing projects, people not only gain experience in managing resources. They also begin to perceive resources in community that they previously didn't see.

Seeding and planting

When mobilising resources in community, a question sometimes arises. Is it best to use one's resources to proactively seek out and support the creation of new initiatives, and to invite new participation? Or, is it better to recognise and support initiatives that are already existing, fostering and furthering their work and contribution?

Do you focus on new seeds, or on planting and nourishing those that have already sprouted and grown? The simplest and most practical answer may be that both need attention.

Complementary relationships between organisations

Especially where there are limited resources, it is useful to support the linking or 'clustering' of organisations, in order to combine resources. The focus is on building complementary relationships between organisations and can involve either formal or informal partnerships. Such collaboration and networking is an 'organic' part of community development, but does not just happen by itself. It needs active support. For example, a farmers' initiative (growing food) and an initiative focused on setting up a store or delivery service might partner up.

Reliability

Finding reliable local partners is essential. As important as it is to trust in the resourcefulness in people, it is vital to insure that projects succeed. It is natural anywhere that some initiatives succeed and others fail, but in a post-war community each initiative takes on special meaning. A failure takes away credibility.

The issue of reliability is not only a matter of responsibility in relation to donors. The success or failure of a project impacts the community psychologically. A failure can support hopelessness and decrease further initiatives. Success enhances new initiatives increasing energy and resourcefulness.

Diversity and community resources

A community needs to recognise its resources. And one of the greatest resources in community is its diversity. To mobilise community resources, there needs to be awareness of the problems of discrimination, and the capacity to discover the potential resources within groups that are often marginalised. This includes awareness of gender issues, such as the traditional and emerging roles of women in community. It includes involvement and joint seeking of solutions with people in marginalised ethnic groups such as the Roma. It also includes recognising the capabilities and initiatives of the disabled, old and the young, and those employed and unemployed.

Community autonomy

As described throughout this book, supporting communities to regenerate happens best through recognising the specific needs and inherent resources in community, and welcoming and inviting participation and interaction. This respect for the innate resources in community also allows for a smoother transition when the community no longer needs humanitarian assistance.

XI. Applications of this Model

The model described in this handbook is potentially applicable and replicable in various situations to support post-conflict work, violence prevention and community development.

1. Post-Conflict Regions

In this handbook we have been primarily referring to our work in Croatia. The facilitation methods described have also been used successfully in various trainings and events in other post-conflict zones. To our knowledge, however, the model that we describe here, that combines mobilising communities, regular forums using ‘worldwork’ methods, the combined focus on economic recovery and forum facilitation, and sustained relationships within local communities is unique.

By its very nature, this model will reflect the needs of the region where it is applied. It will also reflect the local dreams and culture, as well as individuals and organisations involved. The experiences we have had in Croatia make for useful templates, and we hope they will be useful for future work elsewhere.

1.1 Order out of chaos

After conflict, a region may be in chaos. There is often a further sense of chaos when help arrives. Many NGOs and international organisations may be present, but there may be serious problems due to lacking coordination among them and with the local communities. It could be extremely useful to have forums among the various organisations present, along with the local community and leadership in order to process the difficulties they are facing, and build networks and pathways forward.

1.2 Relationship between outside organisations and local community

When international organisations intervene in a conflict zone, they are not only meeting the devastating effects in the region, but they bring their own conflicts, and may come into conflict with the people and cultures they are working in.

People in conflict zones need and appreciate help from the outside, but they need to be referred to and communicated with as the key players who will still be there after the international community is long gone. The model described in this book could be useful for working creatively with relationships between the international and local community.

1.3 Self-governance

In post-conflict situations in which the country is temporarily without governance, and the UN or another country has stepped in to create stability, the process of defining self-governance needs support. The type of forums described in this handbook would be useful in such circumstances, to support emerging democracy, and to create an opportunity for outside leadership, local leadership and the community to engage.

1.4 Complementing Truth Commissions and International Tribunals

As described in the handbook, accountability processes in truth commissions and international tribunals are a central part of post-conflict work. Their limitations are that they can only focus on a small section of society, and those tiers most responsible for war crimes. Our model offers a complement to truth commissions and international tribunals (not a replacement), inviting grassroots community to engage with the issues impacting their lives. This helps societies to heal and move on, and it can prevent future violence.

1.5 Negotiating Peace Accords or Settlements

In the process of negotiating peace accords or settlements could benefit from facilitation methods that are able to include the emotional history of the conflict. When that does not occur, agreements are often followed by backlash. The methods could be used among small groups of representatives from each side.

This model could also be used to mobilise communities to engage with the peace process, by involving people in the process that ultimately impacts them. In this way they become part of the solution, rather than a threat to overturning it.

2. Local or Regional Forums

2.1. Local Community Forums

Community forums can augment town meetings and debates, promoting deeper dialogue, creativity, cooperation and initiative, while dealing with issues and conflicts around community violence, needs of the youth, the economy, and multicultural relationships.

2.2 Regional Forums

This model is also relevant to support a wider network of relationships among individuals and organisations interested in furthering relationships and working together on shared regional concerns. For example, regional forums are being developed among post-soviet states. Another regional forum is developing for post-Yugoslav countries. Or, we have had forums focusing on issues facing Europe, including how to face our violent history,

relationships between east, west, north and south, and how to move forward as multi-cultural societies.

3. Enhancing Dialogue for Decision Makers

It could be very useful for representatives of various decision-making bodies, such as governments, regional bodies or international organisations to meet in small and larger forums, to debate, discuss and clarify their individual and joint responses, and allocation of resources in post-conflict zones, or for community building. While it would be an unusual step for such meetings to deal with the underlying polarisations and emotional tensions directly, it could contribute to differentiating the issues and their complexities, and enhance working relationships to maximise resources. This may be relevant both for situations of emergency response as well as when there is a need for long-term planning.

4. In Crisis

In crisis, when coordination is the most vital, it is the most difficult.

4.1 This model can be useful within and between organisations to prepare for crisis, to process anticipated difficulties and improve response.

4.2 Similarly, the model can be used in the midst of crisis, even or especially when organisations may conflict with one another about how to best respond. International and local agencies and players can be rapidly called together to elicit coherence and team-work in responding to emergency.

5. Pre-emptive Violence Prevention

A pre-emptive intervention addresses tensions before they escalate. This model is ultimately useful to support societies to address and transform tensions in communities, further community relationships, and further community and economic initiatives, long before violent conflict, and so promote active participation among organisations and communities, in finding alternatives to violence, and strengthening community relationships.

The economic costs of such a model, to enhance and support the wide range of work throughout all sectors of society, would be microscopic in relation to the costs of war. Working to avoid the human costs of war is a responsibility that belongs to us all.

Closing Remarks

It has been a pleasure and a challenge to describe our model, to capture and record key points of our learning in a way that we hope may be useful for the future of post-conflict work and violence prevention. We've combined description and analyses of our experiences, with some of the theoretical basis of our work. This was accompanied by the passion and enthusiasm that comes from witnessing the potential in people to come through the most difficult situations and create their future.

In describing our model, we have continually underscored the vital importance of cooperation and trust among partner organisations, donors, and associates, as well as the communication and cooperation between sectors and among diverse individuals and organisations. So, it is fitting that the writing of the manual has also been a cooperative effort among partners, and includes our different areas of knowledge and experience. This has been a creative process involving lots of team-work, and including the complexities of working in different countries, with different languages, and with different working rhythms.

Perhaps the greatest value and importance of this text is that it brings across some of the enormous energy, emotion and wisdom of the participants of our forums, meetings and projects, from all of the war-affected communities. It is these participants who have invested themselves in transforming conflict, dealing with the unanswered questions of accountability, processing the trauma of their communities, developing relationships and cooperation and re-creating life in devastated communities. Thank you to everyone who shared part of his or her life, time, labour and faith in humanity and community.

In a way, this handbook is an attempt to continue the participants' interactions with one another, extending outward to a direct conversation with the public – sharing some of their courage, deepest emotion, and most personal and intimate stories. Whether you have been a part of violent conflict in your region of the world, or are interested in being of support in the process of recovery and prevention, we hope that the handbook may contribute to continuing dialogue, and individual and community awareness and action.

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