

Building Cooperative Peace in Response to Violence within Emerging Democracies

Partners for Democratic Change, August 2002 Written by Jonathan Leit with contributions from Brad Heckman & Jennifer Lofing Pursuant to a Grant from the United States Institute of Peace

This paper presents a two-year program designed by Partners for Democratic Change, in cooperation with the Alliance for Conflict Transformation, which aimed to analyze and address different forms of violence in diverse communities. The five sections provide an overview of the program, introduce the implementing organizations, describe the design of the program's methodology and training component, analyze case studies on the implementation of the program's skills, and offer lessons learned. Through the analysis of three main categories of violence, and the adaptation of skills and techniques to utilize in managing violent conflict, program participants have succeeded in designing and implementing interventions in violent, post-violent and potentially violent communities, and contributed towards local and regional cooperative peace.

I. INTRODUCTION

Violent, post-violent and potentially violent inter-group conflict poses a unique challenge to building stable democracies in transitioning countries worldwide. Managing change, resolving conflicts and building consensus within a community requires a basic level of trust, communication and willingness to cooperate among sectors of society. When xenophobia, racism, discrimination and other forms of intolerance divide a community, any efforts at building democratic institutions and participatory initiatives take on a new dimension; this becomes especially challenging in developing democracies, which often simultaneously undergo structural changes and social upheaval. New ideas and approaches are thus needed both to reduce tensions and prevent violence within communities, and to build towards a cooperative peace in which all sectors of society, including the disadvantaged and under-represented, actively contribute to their communities through participatory decision-making and collaborative work.

Partners for Democratic Change (Partners) is a non-governmental organization that develops local capacity to manage change, resolve disputes and build consensus worldwide. Since 1989, Partners has worked in over 50 countries to provide all sectors with vital change and conflict management skills and processes, and to facilitate the resolution of disputes and build consensus on local issues. Partners' local and transnational initiatives address citizen participation, good governance, the rights of disadvantaged groups, and the rule of law. Through its skills and processes, Partners has helped thousands of beneficiaries to design and implement participatory projects on housing, educational and employment opportunities for minorities, revamped taxation systems and public services, new leadership positions for women and youth, increased public safety, and other community improvements. Further, Partners builds locally staffed and managed Centers that share its mission and a common set of change management, conflict resolution, and consensus building programs; Centers are currently located in Albania, Argentina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Georgia, Hungary, Kosovo, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia.

In 1999, Partners and the Alliance for Conflict Transformation (ACT), an organization committed to expanding the knowledge and practice of conflict transformation and peace building within the U.S. and international communities, collaborated to design a program to respond to the growing need for

methodologies that can be applied to violent, post-violent and potentially violent communities. This two-year initiative, supported by the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), convened practitioners from Central/Eastern Europe, the Balkans, South Caucasus, and Latin America for a training that analyzed violence and devised and exchanged innovative techniques and intervention strategies for resolving conflicts and building consensus with volatile communities. These experts then adapted their new skills to fit local needs and culture, and applied them to concrete issues within violent, post-violent and potentially violent communities through interventions such as conflict resolution services, citizen participation initiatives, and good governance programs.

This paper will summarize and discuss the program's methodology and implementation, and will then draw upon case studies from Partners' work that illustrate the application of the program's skills to diverse issues and communities.

II. PARTNERS FOR DEMOCRATIC CHANGE & ALLIANCE FOR CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION

When first designing this program in 1999, Partners explored collaborating with various organizations on its implementation. Partners selected ACT based on several factors, including a history of cooperation and ACT's familiarity with Partners Centers' staff and work. In addition, ACT's practitioners themselves represent diverse ethnicities and groups, thereby embodying the inter-group work they promote, and have implemented a range of conflict resolution and consensus building models in various environments.

The following provides an overview of both organizations' history and achievements:

Partners for Democratic Change

Partners is an international non-governmental organization committed to building sustainable local capacity to advance civil society and a culture of change and conflict management worldwide. Since 1989, Partners has worked in over 50 countries to provide all sectors with vital change and conflict management skills and processes, and to facilitate the resolution of disputes and build consensus on local issues.

Initially, Partners pursued its mission through the development of conflict management curricula within Central and Eastern European universities. Beginning in 1993, Partners broadened its impact by establishing local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) known as Centers for Change and Conflict Management, initially based in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia. These NGOs, entirely staffed and managed by local citizens, had the mandate to train representatives from all sectors in skills such as effective communication, negotiation, and mediation, while Partners' headquarters in New York and San Francisco provide training and mentoring for new Centers and convene their practitioners for cross-organizational learning. As local NGOs, each Center developed its own areas of specialization based on constituent needs.

At the same time, Centers were faced with an increasing demand to respond to local conflicts regarding inter-group relations, environmental concerns, and neighborhood disputes. Therefore, in 1995, Partners began to work with Centers to develop conflict resolution services, such as mediation centers¹, ethnic conciliation commissions², and cooperative planning³ initiatives that would help citizens resolve their own disputes. Today, Centers annually mediate hundreds of community, ethnic, municipal, and private sector disputes, and facilitate cooperative planning processes on housing, taxation, education, and environmental issues in about 50 communities. Meanwhile, Partners realized that for conflict resolution

and citizen participation processes to be fully legitimized in communities, public policies were needed that recognized such mechanisms; Partners now works to promote legislation that sanctions mediation as a viable and official resolution vehicle, and encourages citizen involvement in local decision-making.

Beginning in the late 1990s, Partners' practitioners were increasingly faced by violent or potentially violent situations. As Centers increasingly intervened in inter-ethnic conflict and highly charged societies, and with the devastation left by the Balkan wars, Partners found a tremendous need for its skills and processes at both local and transnational levels. In response, Partners mobilized to adapt its skills and processes to meet the needs of violent, post-violent and potentially violent communities, including interventions in Roma-majority conflict, work with internally displaced persons, citizen-police and public safety initiatives. Further, Partners developed new Centers in areas plagued by war, including Georgia, Kosovo and Albania, and designed cross-border initiatives in good governance and women and youth leadership that combined diverse, and often divided, populations.

Simultaneously, Partners introduced new and advanced skill sets to Centers to manage violent conflict. Partners thus organized the "Building Cooperative Peace" program as part of its ongoing effort to respond to the capacity-building needs of its Centers and constituents with innovative tools and techniques that meet ever-changing local and transnational realities.

Alliance for Conflict Transformation

ACT is a non-profit organization committed to expanding the knowledge and practice of conflict transformation and peace building within the U.S. and international communities. ACT programs focus on designing and implementing training, education, research and interventions to help reduce inter-group tensions, and cooperatively and constructively resolve conflicts in communities. Established in 1999, ACT is an alliance of skilled professionals with over 50 years of collective experience in conflict resolution and community building. ACT members have conducted research and interventions in more than 20 countries and have trained over 2,500 people in conflict resolution skills. ACT's experience with inter-group projects includes:

- Georgia-Abkhazia Youth Leadership: Designed and facilitated a five-week conflict resolution and leadership development program for Georgian and Abkhazian high school youth.
- Bulgarian Ethnic Relations Assessment: Conducted an assessment of Roma-Bulgarian and Turk-Bulgarian relations and conflict issues in three cities in Bulgaria. Designed a long-term conflict resolution and development program to address issues that emerged from the assessment.
- Inter-group Conflict Resolution in Israeli Schools: Worked with the Israeli Ministry of Education to design and deliver a nation-wide inter-group conflict resolution and violence prevention training-of-trainers program.
- Violence Prevention Training Program: Developed the Peacemaker Corps training program, a nation-wide violence prevention and conflict resolution program sponsored by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development.

III. METHODOLOGY & PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The program was conceived in response to a request from Partners-Czech Republic in 1999, which found itself intervening in increasingly complex Roma-majority conflicts with the potential for violence, and sought Partners' assistance in building its capacity.

In response, Partners initiated a two-year program to strengthen the entire network's capacity to work in

violent, post-violent and potentially violent situations. In collaboration with ACT, Partners designed a methodology with the following components:

- Conduct needs assessment of Partners' practitioners in managing violent conflict
- Convene practitioners from Central/Eastern Europe, the Balkans, South Caucasus, and Latin America for a training-for-trainers to analyze violence and devise innovative techniques for resolving conflicts and building consensus with volatile communities
- Design action plans with training participants to apply their new skills to projects in their home countries such as conflict resolution services, citizen participation initiatives, and good governance programs
- Acculturate techniques and implement action plans in violent, post-violent and potentially violent communities
- Monitor application of skills and techniques, exchange experiences, and disseminate lessons learned

Needs Assessment & Training-for-Trainers

Partners and ACT designed a self-assessment questionnaire that each Partners Center completed, based on their experience and plans for working in communities facing violent conflict. This assessment solicited information on challenges that practitioners face in managing violent conflict, their needs to more effectively work within violent communities, and specific case studies illustrating relevant experiences. Participants provided a range of feedback, indicating that they wanted to learn more about violent conflict management theory and practice, how differing worldviews lead to violence, and specific techniques for community violence management. With this data, Partners and ACT assembled a training team with diverse academic backgrounds, training expertise, and experiences in intervening in violent communities, to meet all the participants' needs.

In response to participants' feedback, Partners and ACT focused on analyzing three types of violence: direct, structural and cultural. Direct violence is a history of mutual hatred and oppression among groups, structural violence is social and economic inequality imposed on one group by society, and cultural violence is the majority culture perceiving minority culture as disturbing national cultural cohesion. These three forms overlap and are intertwined, and taken together, provide a broad overview of many of the sources of conflict. Through the training, participants analyzed how their peace building experiences could further define violence and how to design appropriate interventions in response.

Partners and ACT also developed a substantial manual to accompany the training, including resources on truth and reconciliation commissions, ethical dilemmas in conflict management in violent communities, approaches to dealing with different forms of trauma, analyses of conflict in war-torn societies, and articles on specific cases.

In November 2000, Partners convened organizational staff and practitioners from Argentina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Georgia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and the United States, as well as additional NGO representatives from Armenia, Estonia, Latvia and Ukraine, for the four-day training-for-trainers in Vilnius, Lithuania. The diverse composition of the participants, which included professors, psychologists, sociologists, disability experts and other professionals, offered a range of perspectives on violence-related issues.

Partners and ACT designed an intensive training program, utilizing different instructive methodologies: sharing of experiences among participants, prescriptive teaching, and elicitive training⁴. Each day

combined these diverse approaches to learning and followed a parallel format:

First, trainers presented introductory information on violence management theory. This component analyzed types of violence (direct, structural, cultural) and manifestations of these forms, including individual disputes, inter-group conflicts and widespread social discrimination. Utilizing real case studies from the Republic of Georgia, Guatemala, Somalia and the United States, participants formed small groups and mapped the dynamics of various conflicts based on these models, and examined the effects of conflict on individuals, women, children, ethnic minorities and persons with disabilities. Participants then discussed how the analysis of the type of violence present in a community informs the appropriate intervention response. For example, promoting new public policy is effective for addressing structural violence, while building local institutions such as Conciliation Commissions and mediation services best curb direct violence.

Next, the trainer team reconvened the group and utilized interactive role-plays and simulations to outline approaches for intervening in varying levels of escalated conflict. Forms of direct intervention include crisis intervention/non-violent action, monitoring, witnessing, inter-positioning, modeling, accompaniment, and open forum. In addition, different tools of conflict resolution can reconcile differences, such as mediation, negotiation, assisted dialogues, problem solving, facilitation, education, and conferences. Trainers examined the roles of community decision-makers within conflicts and how they may lend resources, assets and legitimacy to an intervention process.

For example, one simulation was based on a real conflict in Arna Valley, Virginia, in which a dialogue process was convened to work with hostile groups. At one point, media had burst in and disrupted the process, and at another, local stakeholders secretly approached process participants to promote their own agendas. Training participants recreated this situation and an ensuing riot to analyze methods for managing the introduction of unanticipated elements (especially the media) and subsequent violence. In a key moment of the training, Partners-Argentina's Director maneuvered through the simulated riot, and utilized her skills to quiet the crowd and maintain peace.

With this new knowledge, participants formed small groups to share their own experiences in managing violent conflict, analyzed their in-country situations, and proposed appropriate intervention strategies in response to each form of violence. In each team, participants identified subjective and objective impacts of violence on the community.

Participants then worked in small groups to design training modules, techniques and simulations for working with divided communities. In this portion, participants learned how to develop effective programs to address community violence, with clear objectives, a balanced composition of participants, and a strong evaluation component. Participants were taught how to take into account issues of timing, security, ethics and cultural differences. Participants developed a series of questions for practitioners to consider before implementing an intervention, including issues of physical safety, media involvement, location of the intervention (neutral territory vs. within the conflict zone), human rights violations and power imbalances, overlap with other peace building initiatives, and underlying motives of both trainers and participants. Further, the group analyzed the psychological dimensions of violent conflict, which manifests in intense emotions (fear, grief, anger, despair), behavioral patterns (disruptions, threats, violence), and pervasive attitudes (pessimism, paralysis, helplessness, apathy, fatalism).

As an example, one group designed a training exercise to demonstrate the role of local governance in managing potentially violent conflict. Participants representing residents of an economically depressed

community were divided into neighborhoods of unequal size. The local government was given balloons, representing limited resources, to distribute to the various neighborhoods based on perceived need. In each neighborhood, a different color balloon represented the largest resource supply. As balloons were distributed, the different communities had to vie for resources, working both collaboratively and confrontationally with local government and adjacent neighborhoods to ensure their needs were met. The exercise was frozen every few minutes so that the participant group could analyze the dynamics of the conflict and propose solutions for local government intervention.

In the final training component each day, participants designed in-country action plans to adapt and utilize the new techniques, modules and simulations in a manner that resonates with their local constituencies. On the final day of the training, participants benefited from critiques and feedback from the trainer team and their colleagues through the creation of an "open marketplace," in which participants circulated the room and met in small groups to review their action plans. This exercise facilitated the sharing of skills and techniques, and resulted in participants incorporating ideas from one another into their own plans, as well as exploring cross-border programs for future collaboration. In addition, this portion was critical to the real-world utilization of skills, in order to acculturate interventions and ensure that they build upon and complement existing tradition, rather than impose an incompatible approach on a community.

The training-for-trainers was highly evaluated by participants, who left with a theoretical framework for managing violent conflict, new exercises and techniques for intervening in divided communities, and in-country action plans that applied their tools to working in concrete projects. The training embodied one of Partners' core values - cross-border sharing of skills and experiences - and has resulted in new community interventions and East-East transnational programs.

Skills Application & Dissemination

The key component of the program has been the application of training participants' new skills to managing violent, post-violent, and potentially violent conflicts within communities in their home countries. Following the training-for-trainers, participants imparted their new skills and resources to other staff in their Centers and organizations. Utilizing the in-country action plans developed at the conclusion of the training, participants identified current projects and new opportunities in which to implement their skills. Further, Partners developed new initiatives specifically targeted at post-violent communities, and employed participants in these projects. Some highlights from Partners and Centers' interventions include:

- *Partners-Bulgaria* designed a training and service provision intervention to introduce mediation to prisons, in order to contain or avert direct violence among and between prisoners and guards in this highly volatile environment. For example, violence broke out when a young disabled prisoner had to share a bunk bed with a long-term prisoner convicted of murder; the long-term prisoner refused to relinquish the status of sleeping in the lower bed, while the new prisoner's disability prevented him from sleeping in the upper bed. A social activities inspector trained by Partners-Bulgaria mediated a session in which the long-term prisoner agreed to sleep in the upper bed until a vacancy allowed the disabled prisoner to move to a new cell. As a result of the settlement, there has not been additional violence between the prisoners.
- In the city of Pardubice, *Partners-Czech* conducted ten seminars on ethnic tolerance, including one on Roma rights and inter-ethnic communication; by the conclusion of the project, the Center will have trained 125 participants in ethnic tolerance skills.
- Under its South Caucasus Young Women's Leadership Institute, *Partners-Georgia* trained 24 young women who have gone on to implement their skills in various inter-group peace building efforts, including organizing a training for "Youth Against War" by the Helsinki Citizens' Assembly in Georgia; training refugee children in team building and communication skills; and facilitating the

School for Intercultural Dialogue and Understanding Conference. Further, the Institute provided a venue for collaboration among divided groups dealing with direct and structural violence, including Armenians and Azeris.

- In Tiszavasvari, *Partners-Hungary* is facilitating communication and cooperation between Roma and municipal government in order to build tolerance and curb structural and cultural violence. A nation-wide Roma civil association has been formed to represent their interests, and Partners-Hungary is conducting training programs for Roma citizens and leaders in communication, presentation, negotiation and mediation skills.
- *Partners-Poland* utilized its skills by facilitating a cooperative planning process with diverse groups in Lomianki, a town paralyzed by a significant socio-economic gap, increasing incidents of youth crime and potential violence. As a result, Lomianki's youth are now working against structural violence and towards constructive goals, including a cultural festival and magazine that include the entire town, recreational contests, and the prospect of improved school systems.
- *Partners-Romania* trained and facilitated a series of discussions with officials from Romanian Ministries and representatives from the Roma community, to enhance their efforts to develop a collaborative national strategy for improving minority rights and ethnic relations and for managing escalated conflicts in the country.

Several cases in which Partners and Centers applied its skills are discussed in-depth in Section IV below.

IV. CASE STUDIES

Program participants have utilized their skills and methodologies to design interventions such as introducing conflict resolution services, building local institutions, strengthening good governance and implementing public policies. From these examples, it is clear that the program's expertise can be adapted to a range of environments and group dynamics to work within various violent, post-violent and potentially violent communities.

Mitigating Direct, Structural & Cultural Violence in Multi-Ethnic Communities: Bulgaria

High levels of structural and cultural violence characterize the relations between Roma and the majority population in Bulgaria, which oftentimes result in open discrimination and incidents of direct violence. Roma suffer from poverty, unemployment, low education levels, and isolation from the rest of Bulgarian society. Unemployment among Roma groups is as high as 90 percent, living conditions in their neighborhoods are poor, and plans for infrastructure construction such as roads, water and sewer systems are not given priority. Because of stereotypes that Roma are lazy and unreliable, many businesses will not employ them, while local governments rarely have programs that target the integration of minorities. At best, these ethnic tensions destabilize communities and prevent Roma from improving their standard of living; at worst, they escalate into outbreaks of violence.

Partners-Bulgaria utilized its skills from the November training to design an intervention to immediately prevent direct violence, and gradually alleviate structural and cultural violence, through a comprehensive program in the cities of Lom, Vidin and Kjustendil. The Center first analyzed the direct, structural and cultural violence within the communities, and fleshed out concrete issues to be addressed. The Center was especially faced by the challenge of incorporating uninterested and skeptical stakeholders into the program, including local government officials and the media, and utilized its skills from the training to manage these groups.

In response to this analysis, Partners-Bulgaria implemented a holistic intervention in Lom, Vidin and

Kjustendil. First, the program established Conciliation Commissions in each city to introduce local conflict resolution institutions to immediately curb direct violence. These Commissions, consisting of diverse representatives of all ethnic groups, work to cultivate the support of the community and local governments, and prevent and resolve public disputes. Second, Partners-Bulgaria facilitated cooperative planning processes, which use participatory rather than confrontational approaches, to focus on economic development, education and social support for minorities, thereby addressing ingrained structural and cultural violence. Third, a two-year Leadership Institute for 75 minority leaders in Lom, Vidin and Kjustendil was established to help participants build their leadership, management, and networking skills in order to effectively organize and cooperate with each other and the majority community in finding peaceful solutions. Finally, in keeping with the cross-border learning initiated at the training, Partners-Bulgaria facilitated site visits for community members to diverse communities in the Czech Republic and Hungary.

The impact of Partners-Bulgaria's initiative on Roma integration has been concrete and far-reaching, and has already received national recognition as a model for peaceful inter-group coexistence. The Center's employment projects have led to 78 permanent and 109 temporary new jobs for minorities in Lom, 64 new jobs in Vidin, and 48 in Kjustendil, in businesses such as a cherry orchard, a nursery, a sausage shop, a baker, a clothing factory, and a cattle farm. In addition, Partners-Bulgaria is providing business development training, consultation and information to increase opportunities for Roma businesses and integrate them fully into the local economy. As a result of the Center's efforts, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Kjustendil is exploring concrete measures to improve the working relationships between Roma and Bulgarian firms, and a Businessmen's Club will be established in the Roma quarter.

Education projects have resulted in improved tolerance, inter-ethnic relations and increased school attendance. The dropout rate in Lom has significantly lowered, especially among children participating in extracurricular activities established by the program, including football teams, English and Bulgarian language classes, a dance club, a media studio, and a school radio station. In Vidin, Partners-Bulgaria initiated the Accessible University Education for Roma, which works to increase the interest of Roma and disadvantaged Bulgarian students in higher education, and provide tutoring for enrollment examinations. In Kjustendil, Partners-Bulgaria's programs to decrease ethnic tensions in schools have included a children's garden that brings Roma and Bulgarian children together to build tolerance and communication skills, and collaborating with local media to produce television programs on minority cultures.

In addition, social projects in the three cities have improved services for minorities and strengthened inter-ethnic cooperation. In Lom, a Center for Health Education for disadvantaged women was established, and in its initial six months, over 2,000 women have received consultation services. Social projects in Vidin have included a health education program for women and young people that brings gynecologists, pediatricians, dermatologists and psychologists together to work with the Roma population on health issues and improve the health of the community. In Kjustendil, a Roma Women Consultative Center was founded to increase women's role in strengthening civil society, and will address women's health issues, the prevention of all forms of violence, educational and professional opportunities for Roma women, the defense of women's rights and equality, and strengthening family relations.

In sum, Partners-Bulgaria has utilized its skills to implement a holistic strategy to address direct, structural, and cultural violence through building sustainable conflict resolution institutions and community initiatives that integrate minority groups, decrease the potential for violent confrontations, spur cooperation across sectors, and provide concrete services and opportunities to minorities. By facilitating the creation of jobs, educational opportunities, and social services for Roma, Partners-Bulgaria is working to break down stereotypes and build collaboration and tolerance between groups.

Confronting Structural Violence through Public Policy: Argentina

Following the murder of a young child in 1998 in Castelar, the largest city in Morón County, Buenos Aires Province, citizens spontaneously mobilized to address the need for improved public safety. Communities established informal security forums, and soon thereafter the government institutionalized the forums in Public Security Provincial Act 12154, which led to the creation of 322 of these forums throughout the Province. But because forum participants and public officials lacked the essential skills to set up, manage, and utilize the forums, they proved to be ineffectual.

In response to this situation, Partners-Argentina designed a cooperative planning intervention to address structural violence, through developing public policy recommendations aimed to improve public safety in a post-violent community. Cooperative planning promotes cooperation across sectors, and through concrete community activities, works to build sustainable trust and curb the effects of violence. First, Partners-Argentina trained members of the South Castelar and other forums in constructive dialogue, managing conflict, teamwork, and cooperative planning. Partners-Argentina worked with the members to organize their activities, address power imbalances within the forum, build a budget and raise funds, and hear testimony from crime victims. Through these efforts, the forums began to develop the skills necessary to identify challenges, propose successful responses and ultimately expand their capacity to strengthen public security.

Following these leadership and skills trainings, Partners-Argentina convened leaders from seven forums in Morón County, provincial and municipal leaders, district attorneys, the Legislature of Buenos Aires Province, local NGOs, and police officers in a series of cooperative planning sessions. These meetings analyzed the implementation of Act 12154, identifying challenges and appropriate community responses, and built cross-sector consensus on an approach. Partners-Argentina staff utilized its skills in analyzing how different socio-economic groups' worldviews influence their perception of authority and communication styles, and was thus able to integrate differing perspectives. In addition, a major breakthrough occurred when the Municipality appointed a South Castelar Forum member, Juan Carlos Martinez, as Morón's new Director of Public Safety; this development greatly facilitated collaboration between the Municipality and the Forums during the sessions.

Based on this collaborative work, Partners-Argentina assessed the implementation of Act 12154 and developed recommendations for improved public safety legislation. In November 2001, Partners-Argentina made an official presentation of the policy recommendations at a public event at the Legislative Palace of Buenos Aires Province, which included the Ministry of Security of Buenos Aires Province, the Mayor of Morón, the Secretary of Security of Morón, Secretary of Public Relations, representatives of the security forums, legislators, NGOs and the general public. The recommendations include identifying and involving stakeholders, implementing public education campaigns to increase community involvement, strengthening relations between communities and government officials, and providing organizational information on running the forums. Partners-Argentina's recommendations also offer judicial reforms to promote crime prevention and public safety proposals, including alcohol abuse clinics, treatment for behavioral dysfunctions, and services for at-risk youth, that will combat the root causes of crime.

Through Partners-Argentina's initiative, relations between forum members and local police have improved, and citizens feel they have a safe place to report crimes without fear of retaliation. Many of the consensus-building skills developed in the forums will be used to implement community policing, substance abuse clinics, community-wide recreational activities, foster care services, and other proposed initiatives. Further, based on Partners-Argentina's recommendations, newly elected members of the Provincial Legislature organized a Security Commission in which Forum members closely collaborate with policymakers and promote citizen participation in public policy implementation. The community-wide benefits of Partners-

Argentina's work were demonstrated in the recent turmoil in Argentina, during which Morón remained one of the few non-violent counties in the Province of Buenos Aires.

Partners-Argentina designed an innovative strategy to address structural violence through linking the local community to official legislative channels, thereby building consensus across diverse worldviews, improving trust across sectors and mobilizing and legitimizing citizens' participation in preventing neighborhood violence.

Curbing Community-Level Violence in Post-Violent Societies: Kosovo

The Kosovar war and NATO intervention followed many years of direct, structural and cultural violence in the province. The Kanuni i Leke Dugagjinit, a code predating the Magna Charta, provides a range of prescriptions for civic behavior and community life, including regulating a form of third-party conflict resolution and the so-called blood feuds⁵. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Reconciliation Councils resolved blood feuds and other conflicts in the province, providing Kosovar Albanians with an alternative to courts, which they did not perceive as neutral or fair (the model of third-party intervention used in these contexts was similar to arbitration). Though these mechanisms are valuable, inter- and intra-group violence involving Serbs and Kosovar Albanians, as well as other forms of violence, persist after the war.

This unique, immediately post-violent situation presented a new challenge for Partners. In response to the province's needs, Partners founded Partners-Kosovo in spring 2001 and established a community-based mediation service to resolve local disputes and assist in stabilizing the province. To work within this difficult environment, Partners specifically employed practitioners from the November training to build the capacity of Partners-Kosovo through transferring skills from Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia; these trainers had already implemented their new skills in their own inter-ethnic programs, and thus had practical experience with adapting techniques and interventions to local realities. The trainers worked with Partners-Kosovo staff to analyze the province's situation vis-à-vis post-traumatic stress syndrome, human rights violations, and the community-wide impact of conflict.

A critical aspect of designing the service, largely informed by Partners' training in analyzing post-violent societies, was the assessment of the local culture and its receptivity for mediation. Mediation as a conflict resolution process is well suited to address direct, structural and cultural violence in that it empowers disputants to generate their own settlements, thereby overcoming assumptions and stereotypes, and working to build and preserve relationships. Partners found that a "modern" mediation service could in fact complement existing local tradition and institutions, and fill a much-needed gap. Partners thus assessed its role as a cooperative one in which it has taken the old Kosovar conflict resolution structures, which remain trusted and respected, and infused them with modern mediation concepts that focus on the disputants rather than the conflict resolver. In so doing, Partners has built extensive networks to share cases and information, and begun to coalesce and modernize disparate conflict resolution energies across the province.

In the year since founding, Partners-Kosovo and its network of trained mediators have helped settle 50 disputes, including neighborhood, property, family, business, employment, minor criminal cases and blood feuds. As the court system is relatively under-developed and unfamiliar to citizens, and with the strong local tradition for alternative dispute resolution structures, the need for Partners-Kosovo's work is only growing. The following case is illustrative of the violence that has been mitigated through the service:

A minor disagreement in a bar-cafe in Mitrovica in July 2002 escalated into a physical confrontation between Parties A1 and A2 (who are friends) and Party B. B was briefly hospitalized as a result of the

injuries he sustained during the brawl, and A1 and A2 were sentenced to time in jail for their role in the incident. Upon release, A1 came to Partners-Kosovo because he claimed that B and his family were threatening to kill A1, A1's family members, and A2. In total, about 60 members of the two extended families were affected by these threats. A1 had tried to reconcile with B, but had been unsuccessful. Partners-Kosovo mediators were able to convene the parties to discuss the conflict, and Party B eventually retracted his threats against both A1 and A2 and their families.

This case is typical for several reasons: (1) minor disputes often escalate to violence very quickly in Kosovo, (2) many cases involve threats against large extended families, thus impacting large numbers of people, (3) many people do not trust the state enough to allow it to be the exclusive arbiter of justice-- therefore, families often still desire revenge in order to protect their honor, even if jail time was sentenced and served.

Partners is working to make the Center's mediation service an integral part of the development of rule of law in Kosovo, by addressing issues and emotions that courts cannot handle, providing people with an alternative to a decision between the courts or vigilante justice, and creating space for the development of a respect for the official justice system over time. By infusing existing tradition with modern ideas, Partners has created a distinctly Kosovar model for mediation, which, in the short-term, is mitigating direct violence in the post-violent province, and in the long-term, works to curb more entrenched structural and cultural violence.

Addressing Post-Violence Regionally through Building Transnational Linkages: Southeastern Europe

For the past decade, Southeastern Europe has been a focal point of ethnic rivalries and tensions, and when combined with government authoritarianism and abuse of power, the region has exploded in widespread violence. Several wars later, Balkan states are now looking towards Europe in building their democratic institutions. Decentralization processes in many countries have resulted in local government institutions with greater responsibility, but they are often managed by inexperienced and under-resourced leaders who lack the skills to mobilize communities and work with constituents. Highly charged inter-group relations persist, but finally there is the stability required to begin to rebuild democratic institutions and culture.

In 2000, Partners launched an initiative, entitled the Southeastern Europe Municipal Development Program, to strengthen local governance throughout the region. The program methodology was modeled on the design of the "Building Cooperative Peace" program, i.e. trainers are trained in a skill set, then return to their home countries and tailor their new expertise to meet local needs, and then apply their skills through designing and implementing interventions (trainings, facilitations, negotiations, etc). The first year of the Municipal Development Program included training-for-trainers in four different areas: Local Government-NGO Cooperation in Times of Political Change, Cooperative Approaches to Inter-Group Issues, Public Services Management and Mediation Skills. The trainers utilized in this program were participants in the November training, and thus utilized their skills in delivering this training-for-trainers series, especially the component on Inter-Group Issues. Partners is currently initiating the second and third years of the program, which will include four new trainings.

The program has been designed to address the long-term impact of direct, structural and cultural violence, which significantly inhibits the ability of groups to cooperate, by giving communities the tools needed to work in an inclusive manner across diverse sectors and groups. The devastation wreaked by the Balkan wars has created somewhat of an oppositional mentality among groups; thus, Partners' program works to combat years of violence through facilitating cooperation. Training sessions provide participants with an

opportunity to gain firsthand knowledge of democratic systems and training institutions outside the region, while building networks among their peers. Thus far, the program has yielded truly impressive results in strengthening local government and cooperation among diverse groups:

In Bosnia, teachers and educational specialists utilized their skills in working with adolescents to reintegrate them into the schools they had left when the Bosnian war broke out.

The Montenegrin team conducted trainings that increased understanding and acceptance of the differences among the majority and minority populations, acknowledging inter-group tension and violence and the lack of educational access or advancement among minorities. The Montenegrin team also organized public discussions on draft laws for local self-government, the results of which have included a minority Deputy Mayor from Rozaje Municipality regulating the status of minorities in-line with the European Convention for the Protection of Minorities.

The Serbian training team delivered a series of workshops on business cooperation, communication and management for women entrepreneurs and women in local government. Drago Divljak, a Parliament Member of the city of Novi Sad, said that in addition to producing a procedure booklet for initiating small businesses, he will support opening a special office in the city government dedicated to entrepreneurial support. Further, Teodora Vlahovic, a member of the Association of Businesswomen in Novi Sad, noted that since the trainings, the municipal regulations for founding small businesses were significantly simplified, and several procedures were expedited; as a result, communication between city officials and entrepreneurs has been much improved.

In all, local trainers have disseminated skills to some 800 municipal officials, NGO and other sector representatives, and systemic improvements in operating procedures for local governments have been observed in each country. Participants view the training program as a way to rebuild torn relationships in their communities, improve understanding among diverse groups, and break down stereotypes.

Partners' multi-ethnic and cross-sector approach to addressing years of direct, structural and cultural violence has rebuilt strained minority-majority relationships and identified commonalities among peoples through cross-border learning. Further, the development of a formal transnational network that promotes inter-group cooperation has built linkages among former adversaries, strengthened participatory decision-making and supported Southeastern Europe's ability to manage change in post-violent communities peaceably.

V. CONCLUSIONS & LESSONS LEARNED

This paper has explored the design and application of new skills and techniques to address direct, structural and cultural violence within violent, post-violent and potentially violent communities. Partners convenes regular meetings of its Centers in order to promote cross-organizational learning, and at recent gatherings, practitioners have shared and evaluated their successes and challenges in utilizing the new tools. These discussions have distilled a series of lessons learned from the program.

In regards to the program's methodology and training-for-trainers, Partners has learned several lessons. First, the combination of both prescriptive and elicitive models of instruction accommodated diverse learning styles, and resulted in active participation throughout the training. Second, the training benefited by balancing theory and practice of managing violent conflict; theory helps inform practice by providing an intellectual framework for new interventions, while practice helps develop theory by providing concrete

case studies and examples of impact that ensure that theory responds to real world developments. Third, the use of real case studies emphasized that programs need to trust what works on the local level, rather than impose an outsider's perspective on a community. That said, the success of the program illustrated that international models and skills are very relevant to in-country situations when adapted to local traditions and tailored appropriately, as Partners' mediation service in Kosovo well exemplifies. Finally, Partners learned that diversity is both a tremendous benefit and challenge. The participants' wealth of experience and differing backgrounds created a unique learning opportunity, and simultaneously posed difficulties for trainers because of their diverse and specific needs. Partners coped with this situation by designing a comprehensive and varied program that integrated diverse teaching styles and techniques.

In addition, Partners has identified a series of lessons learned from participants' application of skills in violent, post-violent and potentially violent communities. First, as Partners learned in developing a mediation service in Kosovo, it is essential that interventions adapt skills and techniques to local tradition and realities. Second, local institution building and providing skills to existing local institutions works to address all forms of violence by empowering and integrating communities, thereby ensuring sustainable impact; this can be seen in Partners-Bulgaria's holistic intervention to integrate Roma. Third, the success of addressing violence through cross-sector cooperation often hinges on ability to focus on concrete local issues and projects that create new opportunities or services. Fourth, all groups, particularly the under-represented and victims of structural and cultural violence, must be empowered to participate in decision-making processes. Fifth, long-term commitment by community leaders is essential to building trust and sustaining results. Sixth, engaging policymakers and promoting public policy is effective in dealing with structural violence through legitimizing and sanctioning peaceful and participatory decision-making; Partners-Argentina's intervention that provided a platform to an entire community illustrates the tremendous potential for mobilization through legislation. Seventh, both "bottom-up" and "top-down" approaches can be effective in communities, so long as all stakeholders are involved in the intervention and diverse worldviews are taken into account. Finally, as Partners learned through its Southeastern Europe Municipal Program, network building at the transnational level promotes the sharing of lessons learned and resources that facilitates working in local communities.

This program has re-emphasized Partners' commitment to building local institutions and implementing participatory initiatives as approaches to addressing and preventing violent conflict. By providing local actors with skills and resources, they are best able to involve diverse groups and divided sectors in cooperative, concrete projects that teach local and regional communities to mitigate all forms of violence and build towards cooperative peace.

¹ *Mediation is a confidential process in which a neutral third-party works with disputants to reach a settlement that is agreeable to all parties involved. The process works to preserve relationships by helping disputants work together to generate their own options. Mediation provides citizens with a cost-effective and efficient alternative to litigation, and simultaneously unburdens court systems' heavy caseloads. Partners has established formal mediation services in eight of its Centers, and trains in mediation skills worldwide.*

² *Conciliation Commissions are citizen-managed institutions recognized by local statutes that consist of mediators representing the ethnic diversity of their communities. The Commissions serve to monitor majority-minority relations, conduct educational outreach to local groups, mediate disputes relating to ethnic and minority issues, organize forums on issues of minority concern, and facilitate inter-group dialogue.*

³ *Cooperative Planning is a change management methodology that brings together diverse stakeholders in a facilitated process to build consensus around concrete issues, such as infrastructure repair, housing, environmental preservation, economic*

development, educational opportunities, taxation, health standards and pollution, social services and public safety. The process supports cooperation among the NGO, government and business sectors, and enhances citizen participation and empowerment towards tangible community outcomes.

⁴In the prescriptive training model, trainers present information and experiences in a traditional teaching and lecturing format. The elicitive model shifts the focus to participants, as trainers act as facilitators to draw out the experiences and needs of participants. Both models require active participation to meet diverse needs.

⁵Throughout Kosovar history, ethnic Albanians have engaged in so-called "blood feuds," which involve the extended family, possibly over generations, exacting revenge for acts of wrong-doing on the part of another clan or family. Many of the dictums of blood feud pathology are prescribed in the Kanuni i Leke Dugagjinit.

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