



Civil Society Engagement in Peacebuilding

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The need for the presence of a strong institution to bring together disconnected and dispersed segments of society was much realized in the aftermath of war on terror and the consequent phenomenon of talibanization in the North-western and Southern areas of Pakistan. Unfortunately, the institutions in Pakistan did not possess skills and technical knowledge to handle the conflict and hence were not able to prevent it from escalating. Civil society recently has emerged as a strong agent with great potential to play an instrumental role in channelizing the energies at the grass roots for peacebuilding. SPADO

with its partner, USIP initiated a program for building the capacity of the community representatives from the conflict hit areas in innovative non-violent conflict resolution and dispute management skills with the idea that the a network of mediators and conflict resolution facilitators is developed who would do conflict resolution mediation at the community level and would have skills and expertise to further disseminate the technical skills and knowledge. Today after three trainings in conflict resolution and mediation skills, this network has been developed by the name of Peacebuilders Pakistan. Starting August 2009, so far three trainings have been organized for the members of this network. Peacebuilders Pakistan members in these trainings have been trained on ways and techniques to use a combination of traditional and innovative approaches to conflict resolution and mediation. The network's capacity was built through a series of training workshops. Each training course was designed keeping in view specific needs of the facilitators group as they returned feedback about their experiences and mediation practices from the field.

The group developed their own modules blending traditional and modern conflict resolution skills and presented action plans to implement on community level. These included capacity building of CBOs, staffs and mediation on community level. The network is now an active forum for sharing ideas, knowledge, practices and experiences on issues and causes contributing to peace in the communities that they work with. The network mediators are connected through an email list and a social networking blog.

The SPADO takes this network as a valuable channel for disseminating the knowledge, skills and ideas on peacebuilding and conflict resolution and has plans to utilize as catalyst for institutionalizing peacebuilding efforts in Pakistan.

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Training in Advanced Negotiations and Communication Skills May 23-25, 2010

After a foundation course in conflict resolution skills in August 2009, and a follow-up training by the mediators in December 2010 an advanced course was organized for the mediators in advanced negotiations and mediation skills. This course was attended by all the mediators and some new civil society activists. The concepts of differences between facilitation and debate were discussed at length in an open discussion.

The groups discussed in detail the essentials of understanding about a



conflict in community in order to undertake a facilitation/mediation effort, and brainstormed to

identify actors who in particular would be most important to these efforts. The trainers taught the techniques to understand and determine whether the parties are serious about pursuing peace, as well as the kind of intervention most likely to be productive. The participants worked in groups and came up with local action plans to implement on community level. The trainers taught skills on understanding mediators' role in resolving a conflict and understanding the ripeness of a conflict for making an effective intervention. The participants were made to listen an audio presentation on

negotiating with killers/spoilers. Three members from the facilitators group shared their experiences of negotiations with Taliban leaders before military operation in Swat.

Network Activities

After returning from the training in May, 2010, the Peace-builders Pakistan Network remained engaged in the mediation and conflict resolution process directly and on advocacy level. Here we are sharing the some case studies as have been narrated by the mediators.

Advocacy for Peace

TNC Pledged to Extend Help for Addressing the Plight of FATA Flood Affectees

Tribal NGOs Consortium (TNC) is part of the Peace-builders Pakistan Network. The TNC held a Press Conference in Peshawar Press Club in August, 2010 on FATA post flood situations and plights of the inhabitants of tribesmen, women and children. The TNC proposed that a multi-cluster rapid assessment mechanism should immediately be carried out. TNC pledged to provide the services of all its member organizations for facilitating this process.

Proposal for Courses on Peace in Curriculum

Mr. Fazl Maula, our network member shared that a preliminary meeting about the establishment and sketch of Swat University was held on 19th June in Swat. The meeting was attended by professors, development sector activities and professionals from other fields. We took this opportunity to advocate in detail different perspectives for inclusion of courses on conflict resolution and peace on priority basis in the curriculum of the University. The proposal was well-received and was reflected in the minutes of meeting. The reference of the mediators' network was also made to propose the availability and presence of expertise with requisite technical knowledge if it was needed at any stage of the development of curriculum.



Network's Denouncing of Attack on Freedom Flotilla

The facilitators through writings and using social networking blogs condemned Israel's attack on Turkish aid ship Freedom Flotilla that was carrying aid to the Gaza strip. The act was termed as inhuman and the network called for staging a peaceful protest from the platform of SPADO. A press release featuring the concerns of the facilitators' network was issued for publishing to major newspapers by SPADO.

ACTIONS FOR PEACE

The Issue Resolution between Press Clubs in Swat

Mingora is the centre of district Swat and is the hub of business and social activities. For a couple of years there was a dispute going on over the possession of Mingora press club between two journalist unions. The conflict resolution mediators Mr. Zia-ud-din and Mr. Fazl Maula on their initiative started the process of negotiations with both the groups. Later on in the process a member of national assembly (MNA) was involved. With continued efforts both the conflicting parties were brought on the table of negotiations. Other stakeholders like local popular news channels were also involved. The issue was resolved amicably when both the parties came on an agreement to merge two unions into one and operate from the press club.

Training of Pakistani and Afghan School Teachers in Non-violence and Peace

Peacebuilders Pakistan facilitator Mr. Maqsood Ahmad Salfi conducted training for Pakistani and Afghan religious school teachers on peace and non violence in Swabi, Mardan and Tarakai districts of Khyber Pukhtunkhwa. The trainings were conducted from May 29th, 30th and 2nd June, 2010 respectively. Sharing his experiences Mr. Salfi said "it was a great opportunity for me to further disseminate the skills, knowledge and ideas that I learned in three training workshops on conflict resolution with SPADO and USIP".



Training of Child Protection Facilitators on Peacebuilding through Sports

The Conflict resolution mediator Mr. Shahzad Naif developed and implemented a training module on peacebuilding through sports for the staffs of Child Protection Centres in the armed conflict hit areas of Swat. The training was organized in collaboration with UNICEF and trained more than three hundred staff members of the child protection centres of Swat, Dir, Buner, and Jalozei refugee camps. The duration of these trainings was 3 days each. Those trained are working in the community for psycho-social rehabilitation of the children affected by armed violence in the Northern parts of Pakistan. "developing conflict resolution and peace-building skills through sports was relatively new yet a refreshing concept for the facilitators of Child Protection Centres. The concepts of problem solving, communication styles and negotiations particularly helped in developing the theme and relating it to sports" said Shahzad Naif.



Ms. Shad Begum Member mediators network

The trainings we have acquired are helpful in capacity building and we further need such trainings. We can foresee that conflicts will arise in protection as well as land ownership. Females are not given priority and the relief going on is not women friendly. This problem needs a solution. The possible solution is a national level program to put a charter of demand to government and NDMA to solve women's issues

Issue Resolution for Indiscriminate Humanitarian Assistance

Mr. Hussain Ali Sina, the conflict resolution mediator shared his experience of undoing some racial and ethnic barriers that were causing standstill to the rehabilitation and development activities to the humanitarian agencies in far flung districts of Shanagla and Bisham in the northern parts of Khyber Pukhtunkhwa. Here most of the non-profit organizations were formed on sectarian and racial basis mostly affiliated and representing a certain ethnic and linguistic community like Pukhtoons, Gujjars and Mian etc. This trend was promoting negative outlook in the areas so the state military put a ban on all these organizations and establishment of new ones. With that the process of rehabilitation and development suffered badly and ultimately stopped. People lost social contacts and had implications on the employment and economy of the area. Mr. Sina in personal capacity met all the organizations and advocated for a discarding racial outlook for the larger interest of the area. Many dialogues were held in informal sittings with the representatives of these organizations. Community elders from various linguistic groups were also involved. With the continued efforts for removing the bottlenecks for open communication, Mr. Sina was able to bring all different groups together on one table where they have agreed to look into the issue and to address them on their own. Army was also approached for lifting a ban from forming of any organization.

The Afghan Refugees and Local Property in Mohmand Agency

Conflict resolution mediator Mr. Saeed Khan Matta from Almubarik Welfare Society International said that after the Afghan war people of Shabqadar (Mohmand Agency) gave lands to Afghan Refugees for makeshift camps. The refugees continued to possess these lands for three decades until the indigenous community put up a clear demand for vacating their lands. The refugees however are not ready to vacate the area as yet. This situation is giving birth conflicts between the two communities. Our organization is involving Ulema (religious scholars) and Mullahs as mediators for resolving these issues



Mediation Experiences in the aftermath of Devastating Floods

Mr. Muhammad Tahir, from SABAWON organization shared a conflict resolution case during floods. His organization undertook a project for distribution of Food Items and Non-food Items in the KP districts of Charsadda and D.I.Khan. in Charsadda the local Town Municipal Committee had to be involved in the cleanliness of the two Union Councils where the project was to be implemented however the DCO did not approve of the assistance of TMC in the task due to his internal own conflicts. TMC on the other hand was willing to support the organization. Mr. Tahir and his colleagues had several meetings with the DCO and TMC management and the DCO agreed to let TMC staff work with the Mr. Tahir's organization.

Mr. Idress Kamal said that security forces were creating problems for certain organizations at Nowshera for humanitarian work. All those organizations were brought onto a platform who demanded for access and relief operations in the flood affected areas. The network called the Network of Humanitarian Assistance comprises of 16 organizations and is now working for the relief and rehabilitation of the flood affectees.

In the wake of floods another grave issue that surfaced was between tenants/farmers and landlords of lands. In Sheikh Ismail and Mohib Banda, the suburbs of Peshawar, the *Arbab* families hold influential position and own lands. A few years back they had leased out their lands for farming to tenants of the area. After floods as most of the lands were swept away, the land demarcations were wiped away too. After the emergency phase was over as the tenants wanted to initiate working on their farms again, they were halted by the landowners to reoccupy these lands. The situation gave birth to differences between the landowners and the tenants. In Nowshera, Baada and Badaber, same cases were reported where landlords did not allow tenants to come back to their lands. The issue was taken up by the Network of Humanitarian Assistance in a number of press conferences and its meeting.



Mr. Meraj Gul our mediator from FATA shared that a tribal network of elders was set up in different parts of FATA where Jirga Masharan (influential people) formed a Committee for looking into local level issues. The committee also included youth, Ulema (religious scholars) and imams (caretakers of mosque). Family heads of many of the households here work in Karachi and Peshawar for their livelihood, when families were displaced during the military operation, the women, children and the elderly were at the mercy of affairs and were not given due protection. The tribal network held a seminar in which it was demanded that these people must be declared IDPs. Additionally FATA Disaster Management Authority was requested to bring food as well as non-food items to these areas.

Mr. Salfi shared his efforts for facilitating admission process for flood affected students into educational institutions of Peshawar. August every year is the new academic year for graduate studies in Khyber Pukhtunkhwa. The devastating floods caused hurdles for a large number of youth coming from the flood hit areas to meet the application deadlines. Many private educational institutes had no policy for deadline extension and many students were facing problem securing admissions in time. In a number of cases students' grievances resulted in violent protests against the administration of these colleges. Mr. Salfi on his own initiative visited colleges to meet the administration and successfully advocated for an extension in the dates for admission.

Network member, Ms. Saima Gul is the faculty member International Relation Department in the University of Peshawar. She manages a student body IRSA (the International Relations Students Association) on the campus that focuses on political and regional issues in University. Ms. Saima organized dialogues for students about the consequences of politicizing of student bodies at university. Additionally during the floods she had a meeting with the Director of FM Radio channel for Charsadda to utilize broadcasting activities for spreading the message of maintaining calm and courage during floods. She also proposed that politicians and Ulemas should be approached to ask the people to stay calm through media.



The Flood of Conflicts after Floods by Fazl Maula

Pakistan's Swat valley remained under the grip of terrorism in previous three years. Continuous shelling, bombing and blasting during those times damaged well established infrastructure and livelihood patterns of about 230,000 families of the valley on the one hand and gave birth to many internal conflicts in the social set-up on the other.

The community here is primarily agrarian and pastoral. Families have their own fields, where they cultivate gardens and maintain livestock. On July 28 catastrophic floods dashed the whole agrarian systems established after a half century of hard work. Visible damages brought by this flood are known to all but there are yet other invisible issues that are an indication of emergence of devastating conflicts. These are the conflicts that have started rising heads after the floods wiped away century old drawn boundaries and demarcation of privately owned properties and lands which divided and separated the mutual ownership of the inhabitants at large. In many places the ownership conflicts have emerged and there are

no effective and efficient parameters available to settle these issues.

There are at present, two major channels for conflict resolution in the district Swat. One is the government and the other is a non formal institute called *jirga* (elders' assembly). The government channel can work through local administration and judiciary, Tehsildars, etc. The role of the Additional District and Session Judge in the settlement of a conflict is nominal. The *jirga* system is also not as strong due to broken communications and diversified interests of elders as a result of war on terror and flood. This *jirga* system is needed to be strengthened to meet the present day challenges. This traditional channel has proved to be more effective in conflict resolution than the government channel. The previous "Jirga" system was more effective. Conflict resolution and mediation through Jirga was a traditional and common practice in Khyber Pukhtunkhwa, tribal areas and Swat. The system, in practice since British rule, was modified by the government from time to time to make it more convenient for justice. Today there is huge gap existing with no one on the ground to have a visionary look to the issue and its after effects. Village elders, political leaders, MPA, MNA's, school teachers can play visible role in conflict resolution but how to mobilize them is a great question that needs to be addressed. What we need to immediately do is to constitute a flood conflict resolution forum at provincial level with its branches at district level to highlight the issues, conflicts and a framework for the settlement of these issues. This way we may be able to revive the practices of traditional conflict resolution traditions.

