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New Routes

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Post-tsunami peace at stake



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About the authors

Karunyan Arulanantham, Pediatrician, migrated to USA from Jaffna, Sri Lanka in 1971. Gives medical assistance to Tamil refugees in South India and Jaffna.

Orla Clinton, freelance journalist. Has worked for Church of Sweden, LWF, UN, ENI in Zimbabwe and ACT. At present project coordinator at LPI.

Anne Kubai, Research Director for LPI. Holds a PhD and has worked at the Rwanda Ministry of Education.

Basil BS Nyama, reverend, holds a master's degree in communication. Editor of the Horn of Africa Bulletin, Nairobi, Kenya.

Carl Söderlind, Project Coordinator, Somalia Peace Project, LPI Horn of Africa Programme, Nairobi, Kenya.

Shane Quinn, Officer for the Somalia Peace Project, Life & Peace Institute, Uppsala, Sweden, and LPI Horn of Africa Programme, Nairobi, Kenya.

Jérôme Gouzou, Programme Officer at the LPI in charge of Democratic Republic of Congo and the Republic of Congo.

Yacob Tesfai, Senior Research Officer, LPI Horn of Africa Programme, Nairobi, Kenya. Theol Dr.

Gershon Baskin, PhD and Co-CEO at the Israel/Palestine Center for Research & Information, Jerusalem.

Post-tsunami and reconciliation

In this issue of *New Routes*, we look at the prospects for peace in the post-tsunami context. Following the overwhelming worldwide empathy with the victims and the focus on humanitarian aid, the question arises: did the disaster change anything in the stalled peace processes in Sri Lanka and Aceh of Indonesia?

"I saw antagonists in the war working together on the ground helping each other", reports Karunyan Arulanantham in his article from Sri Lanka and reflects on new opportunities for collaboration between the LTTE and the government. But, at the same time, he is less optimistic than when the cease-fire accord was signed in 2002. "Even a calamity of the magnitude of the tsunami failed to change the dynamics that lead to war".

In Aceh, Indonesia, where the tsunami struck hardest, the population is severely traumatised by the ongoing conflict between Free Aceh Movement and the Indonesian military. In her article, Orla Clinton notes that most observers feel the tsunami has been a catalyst for peace. It brought the warring sides back to the negotiating table. Human rights groups have, however, raised concerns about forced relocation as a method to undermine support for GAM.

Where and how does reconciliation come into the picture? In his article on the post war assistance to Sudan and Somalia, Basil Nyama criticizes the international community for lack of attention to the need for reconciliation in both countries, respectively. Another LPI colleague, research director Anne Kubai, is looking at the role of the churches and the political will to foster reconciliation and heal the nation of Rwanda.

Finally, do not miss Johanna Mannergren Selimovic's article, *The tricky road to reconciliation*. She has read a selection of literature on reconciliation and concludes that "it takes decades, perhaps generations, until the most basic prerequisites of reconciliation are fulfilled. Meanwhile, we must listen with great respect to people living their daily lives in an environment where they risk meeting war criminals when they go to the bakery."

New Routes welcomes your reactions and contributions!

Tore Samuelsson

tore.samuelsson@life-peace.org

New Routes

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Life & Peace Institute

PO Box 1520, SE-751 45 Uppsala, Sweden

Visiting address: Sysslomansgatan 7

Tel: (+46) 18 - 16 97 86

Fax: (+46) 18 - 69 30 59

E-mail: info@life-peace.org

Web site: www.life-peace.org

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Peace most needed in post-tsunami Sri Lanka

Not only lives and property in Sri Lanka were wrecked by the tsunami. The soul of the community and with it the fragile hope for a peaceful solution to the conflict was more or less devastated after the first months of increased sympathy and co-operation. To turn this trend, a radical shift is needed in the paradigms that have governed post-independent Sri Lanka. The political leadership, the media and civil society must push to promote the paradigm of pluralism and convince all sections of the polity that such policies will be advantageous to them in the long term.

The tsunami struck Sri Lanka on the day after Christmas 2004. Within minutes, over 300 miles of the Sri Lankan shoreline were devastated, an estimated 30 000 people killed and a million people displaced. Children were sucked from the arms of their mothers and fathers who struggled to hold on to them. Tragically, some parents had to make split second decisions and choose between holding on to one child and letting others go, only to watch helplessly as they were sucked into the sea.

Survivors not only lost many of their family members and friends from their communities but also all of their possessions, as great waves surged inland with fury, smashing and destroying everything in their wake and then sucking it all back to sea. A significant number of those affected were subsistence fishermen who lost their means of economic survival, when their small boats and nets were damaged and washed away. Farmers too have been devastated as once-arable lands are now useless for cultivation, as they are covered with salt deposits, and

wells and ponds are contaminated with salt water. Whole communities with their homes, schools, temples, churches, hospitals and roads have been destroyed and numbers of children have been orphaned.

The physical damage occurred in a matter of minutes but it may be possible to rebuild and restore physical infrastructure. However, the emotional and psychological damage to those affected continues and will do so for years to come. They remain in terror of the sea, cannot come to terms with their loss and find a motivation to carry on with their lives. Their community support systems are destroyed as all those around them suffer in the same way. The tsunami of 2004 was perhaps the world's worst natural disaster in recent memory, and the economic damage to a debt-ridden country such as Sri Lanka was colossal.

Political background

The tsunami struck Sri Lanka at a politically tense time. Sri Lanka has been in the throes of a civil war for the last twenty years, and the war has

taken its own toll on lives, community relationships and on the economy. Unresolved political relations between the Sinhalese majority community and the Tamil community has led to this conflict and the emergence of The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), who have prosecuted the rights of the Tamils through an armed struggle for self-determination. The war and violence has abated over the last two years since a cease-fire agreement was facilitated by the Norwegian government between the government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE.

The hope was that the cease-fire would provide the parties with space to determine the contours of a negotiated political settlement. It was eventually recognized that neither party could win its objectives through war, that there were legitimate grounds for the Tamil grievances that could not be met by existing political arrangements and which could be met through power-sharing arrangements guaranteeing autonomy. It was the hope that secession, previously a core demand of the LTTE and anathema to the government of Sri Lanka, could be avoided through such a negotiated settlement.

But after two years of a cease-fire the contours of that settlement have proved to be illusory, and today there is neither war nor peace in Sri Lanka. The peace process, facilitated with the active assistance of the Norwegian government, broke down when President Kumaratunge dismissed the government that had initiated the peace talks. It was replaced at a general election by a coalition government, led by the President's party in coalition with The Janatha Vimukthi Perumana (JVP), a Sinhalese Nationalist party,

opposed to any power-sharing arrangements with the Tamil Community or negotiations with the LTTE. The coalition lacks a cohesive policy

machinery to help with the clean up, and in fact the outbreak of infectious diseases, which was anticipated, did not take place. The Diasporas collected

and there were no employment opportunities. An immediate effect of this massive foreign fund influx was the strengthening of the rupee whose valuation went up by close to seven percent within days.

But sadly, these opportunities to turn the economy around and build relationships of trust were missed. Six months later it seems that while the tsunami may have resulted in temporary relief from the prospects of war and economic meltdown, it has not had a sufficiently deep effect on the mindsets and attitudes of politicians or even the people. The conditions that led to the conflict, the war and economic collapse in Sri Lanka remain immutable. Paradoxically, the relief offered by the international community may have even strengthened existing divisions and contradictions.

The government's response to the disaster was inefficient, confused and mired in politics. Despite the outpouring of assistance, the government spokesperson admitted that after months only 30 percent of those affected had obtained relief. There had been little planning or preparation on how to respond to such an emergency. The government clearly did not have the will, capacity or the machinery to respond effectively to the disaster, but could not bring itself to work cooperatively and collaboratively with the international aid community or with local non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Different agencies were created with over-lapping and sometimes contradictory mandates, and then they were changed around within days adding to the confusion.

Aid under political control

Politicians began asserting themselves, preoccupied with protecting their turf and working on expanding their vote banks. The government became anxious about the influx of foreign assistance and started controlling and impeding the free flow of material for relief and rehabilitation. Import duty was slapped on relief items and the clearing of such

The tsunami relief has become the victim of party politics as well.

towards a number of critical issues facing the country, including the way in which the peace process should be advanced and the direction of the country's economic development strategies.

Thus, the effectiveness of the government is undermined by the contradictory views, aims and objectives of its component parts and is in a state of paralysis. The LTTE has expressed increased frustration at what it perceived as the lack of bona fides on the part of the government to move forward on the peace process and make the LTTE a partner in developing the North and East of the country. The government's covert support of a breakaway faction from the LTTE has increased the distrust, and the number of violations of the cease-fire agreement by both government forces and the LTTE has increased. The Norwegians, using the Arctic imagery most familiar to them, have said with some despair "the cease-fire is melting at the edges". The resumption of war seemed imminent when the tsunami struck.

Overwhelming sympathy

Tragedy can make or break a soul and this goes for the soul of a community as well. In the immediate aftermath of the tsunami, the outpouring of sympathy by nationals living inside the country, the Diasporas, as well as the international community was overwhelming. Poor villagers opened their homes to strangers to give them relief. People with little to share provided dry rations and other supplies to local charities. The local business communities sent people and

food, clothes and medicines, and shippers provided free freight to send supplies over. The international community offered large sums of money, medicines, tents and other necessities for immediate relief and has promised more for reconstruction and development. Many governments considered postponing debt payment and pledged funds that held the promise of significant relief to the battered economy.

When I visited an affected area in the Eastern province, ten days after the tsunami, I saw antagonists in the war working together on the ground helping each other. This affirmation of the common humanity among enemies was so heartening, and I felt that this could be used to transcend the bitter divisions in the country. There was the hope that this devastation could turn out to be the catalyst that helps transform the attitudes and policies in the country that had led to the destructive war

Within days of the disaster it became clear that both sides of the conflict had lost military assets and their human resource bases too were exhausted and depleted, and thus the war that seemed imminent a few weeks ago could not take place.

There were other reasons for hope. The outpouring of assistance and funds from the international community came at a time when the Sri Lankan economy had almost reached a breaking point. Mismanagement, corruption and the cost of the war left the country burdened by a mountain of debt. The poorest sections of the country were the ones most burdened by this, as the cost of living index soared

items slowed down. In certain areas army personnel were posted to the camps where the tsunami victims were housed and controlled and restricted flow of aid and aid workers to these camps. The government brought in a provision that all funds from abroad had to be sent to a central account for clearance. While all areas hit by the tsunami suffered from these measures, it was the areas populated by Tamil that were most adversely impacted. Discriminatory politics entered even into the disbursement of aid, and the little assistance that was provided was tilted to favor the politically more powerful Sinhalese communities. It became clear that the government did not have the capacity or even the will to provide relief and rehabilitation to the Tamil areas, even to those within its control.

The tsunami relief has become the victim of party politics as well. In the South the three major Sinhalese political parties were competing among themselves to dispense relief, using the distress of the people to enhance their vote bank, power and prestige. The Tamil areas lacked this attention and concern, and these perceptions were reinforced when the government prevented The Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, from visiting some of the worst affected areas in the country, because they were in the LTTE-held areas. Even at such a time, the government's primary concern was that such a visit would be interpreted as an implicit recognition of the de-facto Tamil state. Maximizing assistance to this badly affected area did not seem to be of primary concern. Such political considerations were perhaps the reason why former Presidents Clinton and Bush also confined their visits to the South, as was the relief work done by the US army.

There is a contest to claim "most affected area" status, recognizing that aid flows will be determined by this, and the initial shock and sorrow that brought people together by a common

tragedy is fragmenting as they begin to re-think in terms of their own losses and potential gains.

That political considerations were

cally. The Christian community has adherents among the Sinhalese as well as Tamil communities. They provided such relief without restrictions on the

Today there is neither war nor peace in Sri Lanka.

affecting much needed humanitarian relief was evident when I was in the Eastern province doing relief work in January. There was no evidence of any assistance being sent to these areas from the government in Colombo. The army had taken up positions in the camps of the displaced people and was regulating access to these people rather than providing any assistance.

LTTE relief to Tamils

The Northern and Eastern province, populated largely by the Tamils were the most severely hit by the tsunami. This is an undisputable fact, all too well documented by meteorological centers the world over. These areas have also been the theatre of the long and brutal war, and its population is the most affected by the war. They have been displaced for decades, living in makeshift shelters and even these have been destroyed by the tsunami. Large sections of these areas were under LTTE control and governance. LTTE took over the relief operations in the area that they controlled. Mullaitivu was one of the worst affected areas and the LTTE's organization of the relief was said to have been very efficient. In addition, various Tamil relief and rehabilitation organizations responded to the challenge efficiently, with the help of teams of Tamil volunteers from the Diaspora who flew in from all over the world to help their people. They were motivated by the wish to be of service to their people, who could not depend on the government even at such a time.

Various Christian groups too provided relief to all sections of the community, effectively and energeti-

basis of ethnicity or religion. However, the work done by these groups became a source of irritation to sections of the Sinhalese Buddhist community, exacerbating existing religious tensions that gave rise to proposed legislation, prohibiting as unlawful "unethical conversions". The allegations have been that Christian missionary and relief oriented organizations prey upon the economic vulnerabilities of Buddhists and Hindus and offer them relief as incentives to convert to Christianity. Such conversions, driven by economic motivations and inducements are considered to be unethical and therefore unlawful. There has been much violence against the Christian community, tirades against them in the press and even the burning of churches.

The destruction caused by the tsunami has evoked considerable international interest in the problems that plague Sri Lanka. On the 16th of May of this year, a number of international organizations and NGOs met in Kandy, situated in the hills of Sri Lanka to discuss and make plans for reconstruction and rehabilitation of the country. They made generous pledges that total to around three billion dollars. But they have also set down conditions for the disbursement of aid, linking it with the need to ensure that the peace process will be advanced with the Tamils and LTTE. Recognizing the mutual suspicion that exists between the two parties, the donors require that the two parties agree to a joint mechanism to administer the funds before any funds are disbursed. The details of this are being negotiated, but the President has made a pledge to the donors that she will work to secure

this arrangement. The JVP – the coalition partner of the government – along with the political party of the Buddhist clergy and vocal segments of the Sinhalese people are against such an arrangement. They believe that such measures would implicitly grant legitimacy to the LTTE as a partner in government and administration.

However, many agree that a start must be made to provide much needed relief. Economic failure and the demands of the world community are forcing the country in directions that are perhaps not reflective of the will of the majority of the Sinhalese people. But this may be the only way to move the country towards peace, although we must also bear in mind that such enforced arrangements are inherently unstable. What the donor community and more rational people hope is that these arrangements may create opportunities for collaboration between the LTTE and the government, and if it works well, it may lead to greater accommodation and the building of trust.

Fading optimism

Although I left Sri Lanka in 1971 I have returned frequently to the country in the last several years. I began medically assisting Tamil refugees in India who were displaced by the conflict in 1991. More recently, after the signing of the cease-fire accord, I have returned to Jaffna to work among the affected communities there. The cease-fire accord was reason for some optimism that perhaps the country had come to its senses, having sunk so deep into poverty and destruction. But today I feel less optimistic and hopeful, as I see the pettiness and old animosities and suspicions re-emerge even in such desperate circumstances. I ask myself why is it that even a calamity of the magnitude of the tsunami failed to change the dynamics that led to war. Why is it that the changes that must clearly be made are undertaken under pressure from the international community and why could not the

momentum for change be generated from within the country? What are the attitudes, mindsets, assumptions and worldview that have turned Sri Lanka, such a resource rich country, into a country mired in war, corruption and poverty?

Former Prime Minister and the present leader of the opposition, Mr. Ranil Wickremasinghe, described Sri Lanka's reality in a speech during the peace talks in Tokyo, when he stated: "At the time of independence, we were a literate, prosperous, and peaceful country ... We have become a divided nation, filled with hatred and bitterness, a nation at war, destroying itself and its people."

Since independence Sri Lanka has had poor a political leadership, who have not made it a priority to forge a pluralistic polity. Democracy in Sri Lanka is associated with Sinhala majoritarianism with scant regard for the political, social and economic rights of minorities, and this deep sense of alienation held by the minorities, especially the Tamils, has given rise to an armed conflict, where they sought secession and the creation of a separate state as the only way out.

The decisions of the majority Sinhala political leadership to impose the symbols and the ideology of an exclusive Sinhalese Buddhist nationalism on a country that is multi-ethnic and multi-religious has further encouraged intolerance among the majority community and consolidation of defensive identities among the Tamils and Muslims. At the heart of this conflict in Sri Lanka is the struggle for identity of all the communities. The majority Sinhalese are struggling to define themselves after centuries of European domination and the challenges of modernity, and the other smaller communities in the island are struggling to cope with the imposition of a Sinhala Buddhist identity on all the different communities in the country. If Sri Lanka is to find its place as a united country in the 21st century

and is to emerge from the crippling effects of decades of war and now the tsunami, it will have to revitalize itself and come together as a people with a common purpose. This does not necessarily call for denying the identity of any of the communities but coming together through the individual strengths of the different communities, towards a concept of equal citizenship.

This calls for a radical shift in the paradigms that have governed post-independent Sri Lanka. The political leadership, the media and civil society must push to promote the paradigm of pluralism and convince all sections of the polity that such policies will be advantageous to them in the long term. Such a shift must also be reflected in the educational policies that are implemented, in the symbols and ideologies promoted and through changes to the political and administrative structures of the state. Constitutional changes to give expression to the character and aspirations of all the communities that inhabit the island must take place, if the cease-fire agreement is to be consolidated into a durable peace and if the billions of dollars committed by the donor community are to be invested in a stable polity.

Some of these are long-term measures and the results will only be seen in the life span of the next generation. But there are short-term measures that can and must be undertaken which will build trust between the government and its citizens and between communities and bear more immediate results. The distribution of aid and development assistance equally to all the victims of the war and the tsunami to re-claim their shattered lives must surely be among the compelling priorities of the government and of the international community. This could be a first step towards the change that must happen.

Karunyan Arulanantham

Indonesia: Tsunami in Aceh catalyst for peace

After the enormous destruction caused by the tsunami on Aceh province, Indonesia, the area and its long-standing conflict at last came into the news. A burning issue was whether the needs for and distribution of emergency aid would cause even more clashes between civilians and military. There are, however, some hopeful signs that the tsunami has brought back the parties to the negotiation table in search for a sustainable political settlement.

Orla Clinton, author of the article, was in Aceh province in January 2005 as journalist for the international humanitarian network Action by Churches Together.

The tsunami that hit large areas of South-East Asia on 26 December, 2004 has been described as one of the worst natural disasters in living memory. The coastal areas of the province of Aceh in North Sumatra, Indonesia, were ravished. A population already severely traumatised by the ongoing conflict between the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and the Indonesian military (TNI) were plunged into uncertainty as to what the future would now hold for Aceh.

So complete was the devastation from Banda Aceh all the way down to Meulaboh, 230 kilometers away, that it was hard to envisage how these areas could ever again be centres of life. Hundreds of thousands of lives were lost, entire villages and towns decimated and up to 600 000 thousand people made homeless. The impact on the health and education sectors as well as local government was glaring in the absence of services. Thousands upon

thousands of professionals perished. Even the military and police had to finally admit that their losses were significant.

Out of scenes of apocalyptic destruction survivors struggled with incalculable loss. Yet one fact was clear throughout this trauma: Aceh was finally open and in the news.

Listening to the Acehnese in the makeshift camps that had been set up throughout Banda Aceh their message

to return to their home areas and rebuild. Some of the more traumatised said they'd prefer to build new lives elsewhere. Practically all people wanted to work at something and try and get back to some sort of "normal" life. Few had any interest in the conflict. Their main concern for now was finding their relatives and burying their dead.

Those courageous enough to speak were clearly scared of the consequences. The current state of Aceh was evident by the strong military presence, which ensured silence and maintained a grip over a fear-ridden people.

Aid under military control

Initially both sides tried to capitalise on the international spotlight now turned on the province. Efforts at a cease-fire during the emergency phase were difficult, as accusation and counteraccusation emerged from TNI and GAM of shootings, kidnappings, and the hijacking of international aid. Access to most of the GAM held areas was restricted. It was difficult to confirm or deny the accusations. In certain areas along the West Coast, TNI soldiers were accused by locals of

**This is the punishment for
all the terrible things that
are happening here.**

was clear. "This is the punishment for all the terrible things that are happening here. We want peace. We're tired", they would say time and again. They wanted

intimidating them with beatings and firing of their weapons. Locals complained of not receiving aid, as the military stored it in warehouses until



Indonesian soldiers clearing the dead in Banda Aceh, a change from their normal routine. In the aftermath of the tsunami thousands more soldiers were drafted into the area to help with the massive humanitarian operation as well as to clear the rubble and bury the dead. Photo: Orla Clinton/ACT

formal distribution. TNI soldiers for their part explained they were merely controlling desperate crowds.

Politically both sides were under pressure to reduce further the suffering of the Acehnese people. Hearts and minds or what little was left of them were at stake. Massive outpouring of aid combined with international pressure and a heavy media presence ensured a process of change. A new picture began to emerge. Indonesian military long accused of killing the living were now removing the dead in a massive clearing up operation. Soldiers worked daily in unbearable conditions to remove the tens of thousands of bodies decomposing in the water or trapped under rubble. Cautiously welcomed by the locals, this new profile didn't quite fit. In every camp visited the military were a notable presence. According to Indonesian officials some 10 000 combatants and another 10 000 military are in Aceh. The humanitarian operation was perceived by many as

an extension of the control and containment measures already in place.

The tsunami forced a return to the negotiating table. Since January both sides have been meeting in Helsinki, hosted by the Crisis Management Initiative (CMI), to try and find a solution to the conflict. The fourth round of talks between the Government of Indonesia and GAM ended on May 31. According to a statement by Martti Ahtisaari, Chairman of CMI Board and former President of Finland, both parties seek a permanent and comprehensive solution with dignity for all. The following issues were discussed: the content of self-government, political participation, economic arrangements, amnesty and reintegration to society, human rights and justice, security arrangements, and monitoring. Experts from the EU Council Secretariat and the European Commission were invited by CMI to observe the discussion on monitoring arrangements. CMI has been asked to

prepare basic documents that could form the basis for the eventual agreement. These documents will be under discussion on the next round of talks starting 12 July 2005.

While progress is being achieved in both political and economic issues, negotiators from both sides admit that their biggest obstacle is the security issue.

Historical background

Staffan Bodemar, an independent analyst from Sweden, groups the Aceh conflict into three general areas: (i) the desire for extensive self-rule and autonomy, (ii) the large-scale human rights violations and quest for justice and (iii) socio-economic factors, including widespread corruption.¹

GAM has been fighting since 1976 for independence. It argues that Aceh should never have been incorporated into Indonesia in 1949, as it was never formally under Dutch colonial rule. Most Acehnese welcomed Indonesian independence, but on the understanding that Indonesian society would be based on Islamic principles, and that Aceh would remain more autonomous.² In 1951 Aceh lost its provincial status and was incorporated into North Sumatra. Top positions went to non-Acehnese and the growing discontent against the central government's religious and socio-economic policies led to the 1953-63 Darul Islam Rebellion.³

The conflict is stoked by a wealth of resources from oil and gas to a lucrative timber industry. Corruption is endemic. Exploitation of the rich oil and gas fields in the north Aceh District in the 1970's led to more discontent. Workers were sent into Aceh from Java and elsewhere discriminating against the Acehnese. The conflict has escalated as a result of what many perceive as injustice and unequal distribution of Aceh's wealth. Aceh has also a higher percentage of Muslims than in other parts of Indonesia, but the conflict is not regarded as a religious one.

In 1976, Hasan M. di Tiro founded the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) and proclaimed Aceh's independence in December. He and other leaders fled to Sweden, where they are now based. Efforts by the military to defeat GAM have not succeeded, as they continue to elicit support from many people.

Peace in ruins

An attempt at peace was brokered at the end of 2002, but by May 2003 that effort lay in ruins. A major crackdown by the Indonesian military up until the tsunami hit weakened GAM but failed to destroy it. Human rights organisations have reported abuses of civilians by the Indonesian military. The media is under tight control. Few people had ever been to Aceh until the tsunami, as it had become one of the most controlled areas in the world. Since the declaration of a military emergency in 2003 at least 3 000 people have died.

The International Crisis Group in a 2003 report on the military's tactics in Aceh said: "The government appears to have no clear objectives in this war, no criteria for "success" other than control of territory and body counts, and no exit strategy. Despite the strict controls exercised by the army (TNI) over information – the government has drastically limited access to the province, particularly by foreigners – the message coming through clearly is that far from winning hearts and minds, Jakarta is managing to alienate Acehnese even further. Virtually everything it is doing now – forced participation in mass loyalty oaths, forced displacement of villagers, arrests not just of GAM fighters but of people branded "GAM sympathisers", and background checks on civil servants – are tactics used before, to disastrous effect. They do not help end separatism: they generate more support for it."

GAM for its part continued its actions. Routine ambushes of Indonesian military and police, targeted assassinations, hostage-taking, arson, and extortion. Since 1999, GAM is also



The drawing 'Tsunami' by four year-old Nural Hikmah shows the chaos of the approaching wave with people shouting 'help, help me'. With the help of drawing therapy children are encouraged to recreate what they experienced. Photo: Orla Clinton/ACT

being accused of committing serious human rights abuses, from killing of police officers and informants to forced expulsions of Javanese settlers, destroying their homes and villages.⁴

The 9 December 2002 cessation of hostilities agreement envisaged Aceh holding free elections and controlling a partially autonomous government, which would keep all but 30 percent of the revenue from Aceh's oil reserves. (Analysts predict that Aceh's oil and gas reserves will be depleted in ten years.) But the agreement collapsed, as both sides failed to live up to their part of the agreement. Instead an all out military offensive was launched, martial law introduced, and tens of thousands of troops drafted into Aceh to keep control.

After the tsunami

Most observers agree that the tsunami has been a catalyst, which reopened the province and the potential for a peace settlement. The task now is to keep that momentum.

"The tsunami definitely brought the two warring sides back to the negotiating table", says Bakhtiar Abdullah, spokesperson for GAM's exiled leadership in Stockholm. At the same time he says that GAM are determined in their struggle. "We want a comprehensive sustainable political settlement, where the people would have a say to determine their own future. We have never dropped our struggle for independence, but at the same time we must respect the aspirations of the people, so if we achieve something out of the negotiations that will be a start."

GAM claims a strong support base of 80 to 95 percent of the Acehnese population. But on the ground people say its support is about 50 percent and accuse GAM as being equally as bad as the TNI.

One problem for the Acehnese is that a number of their negotiators are still imprisoned and unable to participate in the peace process. Yet, a

possible outcome of the current negotiations is the recent dropping by Sweden of criminal charges against the Aceh leaders in exile in Stockholm.

leaders on the ground are already split and continue their operations. Military operations continue in Aceh with the Acehnese delegation claiming that one

to relocate villagers in temporary camps there is a fear by locals that they will lose their land. Abdullah says GAM wants rehabilitation in home areas, not a semi containment system, as relocation camps are perceived to be. Human rights groups, such as Amnesty International, have expressed concerns about forced relocation as a method to undermine support for GAM.

The tsunami forced a return to the negotiating table.

They were detained last June on charges of breaking international law by directing the armed struggle from Sweden.

In a statement following the last round of talks by Malik Mahmud, the Prime minister in exile, the Acehnese delegation highlighted several problems. One was what they referred to as “the serious escalation of military operations in Aceh. We note this has increased distrust among the Acehnese people towards the government of Indonesia. This escalation of military action undermines Indonesian claims of goodwill towards a peaceful and democratic solution to the conflict.”

Indonesian military commanders in the province say they will continue to fight until a peace deal is agreed. GAM

of their district commanders was recently found tortured and killed.

Civilian participation

The fourth round of talks were held 26–31 May this year. GAM’s spokesperson Bakhtiar Abdullah reports alleged recent abuses carried out by the military in areas in east Aceh, where large-scale military operations are ongoing with collective punishment being carried out on civilians.

Civilians are also demanding participation in the negotiations. Consultations between GAM and Acehnese civil society groups have taken place in Sweden parallel to the negotiations.

Main concerns are aid management and security. With the government’s plan

With the Indonesian military playing a lead role in the relief effort those concerns are justified. But it is perhaps the aid flooding into Aceh, which will form the new battlefield on a small scale on the ground. As one observer said: “Everybody knows that the real money has not been spent yet.”

“We need an independent body to maintain the aid momentum”, warns Bakhtiar Abdullah, adding that the one thing difficult to change is the deep-rooted culture of corruption.

Orla Clinton

¹ Staffan Bodemar, “Conflict in Aceh, Indonesia” March 2004

² Ibid

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid, p.12

Khairul Hasni is Executive Director of Jari Aceh Women’s Network for Justice. Her organisation is concerned with the protection of human rights and increasing people’s economic power. Jari Aceh has been working with tsunami survivors – fishermen, salt farmers and tsunami widows in North Aceh. “The tsunami has highlighted what the people of Aceh have been undergoing as a result of this conflict.”

She says that despite the presence of internationals many people’s rights are being abused. “In the IDP camps those suspected of supporting GAM are arrested and taken away. People are subjected to controlling measures, such as the carrying of reporting books. People are still afraid and want the military out, kidnappings and extortion to end and a chance to return to their home areas.”

Khairul says the Helsinki talks need to be more inclusive. “There is still a lack of political will and distrust on the local level to make peace work.” She also notes a big difference between the will in Jakarta to change and that on the ground. “If any change is to come about, the civil emergency must come to an end”, she says.

Kjell-Åke Nordquist, Professor at the Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University, says:

“The one and only critical obstacle is to what extent GAM is ready to give up. By doing so it would remove the fundamental military reason for operating in Aceh. But this is very difficult for GAM considering its history.”

Nordquist explains that even if it were to go to a referendum and the people want independence, that would mean a major shift in Indonesian policy, which would herald recognition for other groups’ fight for independence. “One shouldn’t compare East Timor with Aceh,” adds Nordquist, who mediated between the two military groups who had fought the civil war in 1975. “The tsunami is a catalyst in the short term, but I don’t believe it has shifted the political positions that both sides had before. One needs to recognise also the mood in the province after years of conflict with Jakarta. The need is to improve the lives of the Acehnese, so that there is no justification for the conflict,” says Nordquist.

Post-genocide Rwanda:

Monumental challenges

More than ten years have elapsed since the Rwandan genocide, but the challenges of its aftermath are monumental. The Rwandan Catholic Church has to thoroughly analyse its double-edged role during the genocide and meet the unheard-of challenge of forgiveness and reconciliation. The crimes cannot and must not be forgotten, but hopefully the church can draw from its theological and doctrinal resources to create justice with peace.

The 1994 Rwandan genocide that shocked the world and left the country deeply traumatised, has been described as unique, because it was not “just Hutu killing Tutsi but husbands killing their wives, uncles killing their nephews and mothers killing their children”.¹ Neighbours killed their neighbours and teachers killed their students, while colleagues killed their colleagues at the places of work, including hospitals and church premises. As Kagawa has graphically described, “the fighting was hand-to-hand, intimate and unspeakable, a kind of blood lust that left those who managed to escape hollow-eyed and mute”.²

Many women who were victims in the genocide, having suffered immense sexual violence and trauma, now face numerous new challenges, not only as heads of deprived households, but as widows bearing both the physical and psychological marks of genocide. Their burden has been made heavier by the inevitable predicament of having to live side by side with their loved ones’ tormentors and killers, now released from prison. It is in this context that forgiveness and reconciliation become the only way out of the spiral of violence in which Rwanda has found itself.

The tragedy of the 1994 genocide shook the Christian Church to its very foundations. Not only were members from every denomination in Rwanda responsible for the most appalling of atrocities, but, most significantly, many of the massacres took place in the church buildings where many of the targets of the genocide sought sanctuary.

One may ask, why the churches? The answer lies in the role the church took as an institution in Rwanda. Over the years it, particularly the Roman Catholic Church³ had become the most important of all social institutions (Urvin, 1998:22, Linden 1997:189)⁴ as Prunier puts it. The clergy enjoyed an indisputable moral authority and were deeply revered by the majority of their parishioners. During the genocide, this reverence played a double-edged role: To the victims, when the killing started, the first impulse was to run for sanctuary to the nearest place of worship. To those inclined to kill, the silence and the participation of the clergy in the acts of genocide brought a sense of legitimacy to the killing, not only because they looked up to their leadership, but because in their eyes, the ordained were ‘holy’, even saintly women and men of God. People even attended mass before going out to kill.

Hence it is no wonder that bishops and other clergy are among those who have been indicted for their active participation in the slaughter.

The failure of the Rwandan churches to confront these crucial issues, and particularly how it became pathologically overwhelmed by a message of hatred and death, thus facilitating ethnic genocide, has never been adequately answered. Indeed we are tempted to agree with Mamdani’s assertion that “the violence was marked with greater fury in the church than in any other institution in Rwanda” and “but for the army and the church, the two prime movers, the two organising and leading forces, one located in the state and the other in the society, there would have been no genocide”.⁵

Corporate responsibility

The same church, which failed in its prophetic and pastoral role, and stands accused of complicity in the wanton slaughter of its flock, today faces the enormous challenge of fostering forgiveness and reconciliation.

In the aftermath of the genocide, the Roman Catholic Church was rocked by a rift between those on the one hand who felt that the church should accept collective responsibility; and those on the other, who felt that the church could not be held responsible for the acts of its individual priests, religious and laity. The latter group were represented by the Rwanda Bishops Council, who disapproved of the activities of a commission formed by a section of the clergy, who called for an investigation into the role of the church in the genocide. The official position of the church regarding the role of its clergy in the genocide was well reflected in a statement attributed to Pope John Paul II:

“The church ... cannot be held responsible for the guilt of its members that have acted against the evangelic law; they will be called to render account of their own actions. All church members that have sinned during the genocide must have the courage to assume the consequences of their deeds they have done against God and fellow men.”⁶

This, we can argue, has complicated the situation, and constitutes the first challenge that the church must face – that of acknowledging its corporate responsibility, and offering a formal public apology to the people of Rwanda.

Another great challenge for the church is that of seeking forgiveness and reconciliation from within itself. Pastors, priests, religious and laity alike need to talk openly among themselves as to what really happened in 1994 and discover what it means to confess the church’s own sin first. Unfortunately “religion is strong in many of the bleak situations in the world” and “religious people may be pitiless to other religious people, and sometimes to members of

their own communities”.⁷ It is no wonder then that among the survivors are some clergy, who also need to reconcile with their fellow men of the cloth.

The congregations are also divided, and therefore preaching forgiveness to worshippers becomes an arduous task. According to African Rights’, survivors experience such distress “when they attend church services. One reason is that ‘killers’ are in the congregation or among the clergy.”⁸ Some of the victims of rape during the genocide today pray in the very churches where they were tortured and raped. Priests and pastors who are accused of rape and other crimes of genocide are still going about their pastoral duties as if nothing happened.

In May 2003, 40,000 of those in detention accused of genocide crimes, were granted amnesty and are now living as neighbours with survivors whose families they are said to have butchered. Is it possible for these people to live together? With those accused of killing in the community “walking freely”, for instance in the

dusty town of Nyamata? Rwandans are determined to give it a try. As Carling has observed, “it is an experiment in reconciliation unlike anything ever tried before”.⁹

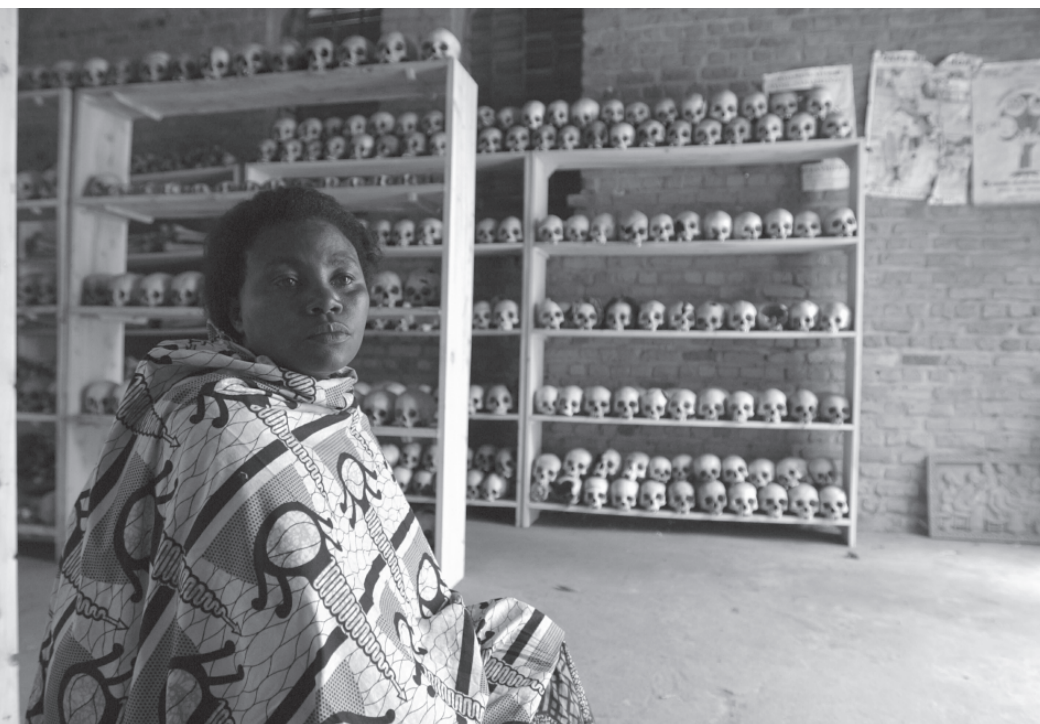
The church that failed

In view of these tremendous challenges, what are the prospects for forgiveness and reconciliation? Is there any hope for the Christians of Rwanda? The church that failed in its God-given task to transform its people from ethnic hatred to Christ must now pray and work towards ending centuries of hatred and strife, and seek to recover from the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of Christians and live according to the Christian teaching of love, forgiveness and reconciliation.

Many people in Rwanda have experienced deep pain and are still suffering and perhaps do not understand that to reconcile is not to condone the crime. But as Staub observed in Rwanda, understanding the root cause of violence is an avenue to healing and reconciliation.¹⁰ Since the church has been the major social institution in Rwanda, it is now important for it to play a major role in the process of reconciliation.

The church that once supported the policy of exclusion and taught that salvation was achieved through the social hierarchy that characterised the traditional Rwandan society cannot now abdicate from its responsibility in the national process of reconciliation. No one can bring back the dead or undo the suffering visited upon the victims. Reconciliation is the basis for a new beginning, a new creation. The church is commissioned to create an inclusive society, which can liberate both the victim from being consumed by hatred and bitterness, and the perpetrator from guilt and fear of revenge.

It has been said time and again that reconciliation is the way out of the spiral of violence and revenge for the Rwandan communities. Hence the government is perusing reconciliation



In April 1994 thousands of people fled to the church only later to be shot or hacked to death. Only a few survived and Danéila Nyirabazungu was one of them. Photo: Peter Williams/WCC

with great fervour, in the belief that it is not only a moral alternative, but the only one. Finding a balance between justice and reconciliation or between retribution and forgiveness is a delicate process and hence a major challenge, not only for the government, but also for the church. The government has demonstrated a strong political will to facilitate the process of reconciliation by setting up the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission¹¹ and formalising the traditional *Gacaca*¹² justice system.

Traditionally, *Gacaca* served four important functions: “It brought together the offender and the offended; it sought the truth; it addressed the conflict; and it reconciled the parties.”¹³ Hence the choice to revive and adopt the *Gacaca* system was not based on a romantic glorification of traditional Rwandan culture. Instead, it appeared to be the most viable and tenable system of justice at the community level available.

Since many thousands of Rwanda’s citizens were gripped by the killing frenzy, administration of justice through the country’s law in the formal law court system would take more than a century. Instead, the *Gacaca* system offers the most viable option for both reconciliation and justice. The goal of *Gacaca* hearings would be to promote reconciliation by providing a platform for the perpetrators to acknowledge their wrong, come to terms with the enormity of their crimes and apologise. For the victims, it gives opportunity to express their feelings and to speak out because “healing requires that people face up to their painful experiences under supportive conditions”.¹⁴

But, “can the balm of reconciliation sooth away the suffering of people”¹⁵? As some scholars would say, “reconciliation does not replace justice; it is the result of justice”.¹⁶ There exists a complex relationship between repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation: the offender must be genuinely sorry and therefore willing to offer a sincere apology, while the victim must be

willing to accept the apology and offer forgiveness. As has been noted above, it is a two-way process that is not without contradiction.

People even attended mass before going out to kill.

Reconciliation is costly, for someone has to pay a price – to denounce revenge or retribution and turn the other cheek. Yet, someone has to break the cycle of aggression and retaliation. Closely related to this is the question of memory – can the victims forgive and forget? As we know, forgiving is not forgetting.¹⁷ Victims will remember, and have to live with the memory of painful experiences. On the one hand, remembering allows people to draw lessons from their past experiences; yet it serves to hinder reconciliation if it continues to re-traumatise the victim. On the other hand, memory must be retained both as a tribute to those who lost their lives, and as an integral part of the process of reconciliation.

Since the church in Rwanda is an institution, and if we agree with van Ness that “institutions identify themselves with the status quo, which they often have helped to create, and in which they have a stake”¹⁸, then we can understand why the church must face the challenge of resolving the issue of peace with justice. The church is called “to administer true justice”¹⁹, which implies action, not empty rhetoric. Perhaps in an attempt to fulfil this mandate, the Catholic Church had to establish the ‘Christian *Gacaca*’, as it is called, but this too is encumbered with similar logistical problems to that of the government system. It is nevertheless hoped that the church can draw from its theological and doctrinal resources when dealing with the issues of justice and peace.

New churches emerging

With the now familiar phenomenon

of the emergence of numerous new churches and religious movements throughout Africa, Rwanda is no exception. The fast growth rate of new

churches has by many been attributed to a feeling of betrayal and disillusionment with the ‘official’ church. Some have never returned back to the churches to which they belonged before the genocide but have rather turned to the churches, which have emerged after the genocide. Now Rwanda, previously known as the most Roman Catholic country in Africa, boasts over one hundred of these new denominations. The emergence of the new churches is a clear sign that all is not lost.

As one woman pastor said, these churches “attract many people because they employ a personal approach, they give a sense of belonging and fellowship”. Thus there may be good reason to suggest that the growth of these smaller fellowship groups is due to their being more readily available to individual members in providing spiritually therapeutic support for grieving survivors than the larger and more traditional churches.

The most important issue before the church in Rwanda today is not the absence of conflict and war, but the creation of a sustainable peace. Many are beginning to acknowledge that “it is only through reconciliation with God that the Banyarwanda²⁰ will reach a position of reconciliation with each other”.²¹ It is in these tenuous circumstances that the church in Rwanda is being called to bring forth reconciliation. It must regain its prophetic role, and thereby facilitate the process of national reconciliation in which all people of Rwanda must participate.

In spite of the difficulty in finding

the balance between justice, forgiveness and reconciliation, there is a realisation that people have a common national heritage. In their commitment to live together as one nation, Rwandans are determined to facilitate the national healing process. It is expected that the formalised traditional *Gacaca* justice system, to which the churches must subscribe, will not only render punitive justice, but also provide an opportunity for reconciliation through conflict resolution by the communities themselves.

The churches in Rwanda have a duty, a scriptural warrant, to teach love, not hate, for both Tutsi and Hutu are made in the image of God. It is amazing that many people still have faith in God and that this faith gives them sustenance and hope from day to day. It is not possible to bury the memory with the dead, so integrating the concept of forgiving and remembering is the greatest challenge for the church, the present government and for all Rwandans. In spite of the enormity of this challenge, we can conclude that there is hope, first because Rwandans still believe in God, and hence forgiveness is a faith principle, and secondly because there is a strong political will to foster reconciliation and heal the nation.

Anne Kubai
Abbreviated by
Kristina Lundqvist

This article is an excerpt from the paper Being Church in Post-genocide Rwanda. The Challenges of Forgiveness and Reconciliation, published in Journal of Constructive Theology 10.1.2004. The full-length paper will appear as an Occasional Paper, published by the Life & Peace Institute, at the end of summer 2005.

¹ Statement by Ms. Aloise Inyumba, past Secretary General of the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission.

² Robert Kaggwa, "Is Reconciliation the New Model for Mission: Reflections on Religion and Ethnic Conflicts with Special

Reference to the Great Lakes Region of East Africa." St. Edmund's College, (February 2003), 1

³ Rwanda was said to be the most Catholic country in Africa. Nearly 90 percent of the population were Christians before the genocide: 62.6 percent Catholic, 18.8 percent Protestant and 8.4 percent Seventh Day Adventist. Though the Catholic Church retains the majority of the Rwanda Christians, the percentages have changed after the genocide due to a variety of factors, including the emergence of numerous new churches. See Government of Rwanda, Kigali, 1994:126-128.

⁴ G. Prunier, *The Rwandan Crisis: History of Genocide*, (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 1995), 33.

⁵ M. Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, (Kampala: Fountain, 2001), 232-233.

⁶ "Vatican Puzzled by Verdict Against Rwandan Nuns". *Afro News*, (June 10th 2001), 1. <<http://www.globalpolicy.org/intljustice/tribunals/2001/0610rwnd.htm>>

⁷ B. Butler, (ed.) *Open Hands: Reconciliation, Justice and Peace Work Around the World*, Suffolk, Kevin Mayhew, 1998, 25.

⁸ Gourevitch, 3.

⁹ Carling, *The Observer*, 24th August, 2003.

¹⁰ E. Staub, "Preventing Violence and Generating Humane Values: Healing and Reconciliation in Rwanda", IRRC December 2003, Vol. 85, No. 852, 802.

¹¹ The National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC) was appointed in 1999, with a broad mandate to facilitate national reconciliation. The NURC has organized workshops and seminars and national summits around the theme of reconciliation. The Commission has also endeavoured to promote civil education in *ingando* or solidarity groups for released prisoners and demobilised soldiers. Its critics say that it is a Government instrument, which is too vertical, with little impact at the grass roots.

¹² Legislation establishing the *Gacaca* tribunals was enacted in early 2001. In late 2001, 260,000 adults of "integrity, honesty and good conduct" were selected by local communities to serve as magistrates on the more than 10,000 *Gacaca* tribunals. These magistrates received limited training in early 2002.

¹³ B N. Rutikanga, 2003:156.

¹⁴ Staub, 2003, 799.

¹⁵ P. Oestreicher, 1998:33.

¹⁶ H. Wells, 1997:4.

¹⁷ J H. Powel, 1999:122.

¹⁸ Daniel W. Van Ness, "The Role of the Church in Criminal Justice Reform", Justice that Restores Forum, Orlando, (March 2002), 4.

<http://www.restorativejustice.org/asp/listing.asp>>

¹⁹ See Zechariah 7:9 (RSV).

²⁰ *Banyarwanda* means the people of Rwanda. The term is now being

consciously used to foster a national, rather than an ethnic, feeling in an effort to facilitate reconciliation.

²¹ Statement attributed to a prominent church leader, commenting on the process of reconciliation in the country, October, 2003.

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Sudan and Somalia: International assistance as part of reconciliation

Many people of Sudan and Somalia bear hurtful experiences of past political violence, civil wars or conflicts. Now that peace agreements have been signed, the need for a process of sustainable reconciliation cannot be underestimated, even in the face of the need to render humanitarian assistance for post-war economic recovery.

Years of political, structural and systemic violence in Sudan and Somalia are chiefly responsible for people's bad memories from the past. These memories invoke hatred, urge revenge, or create deep socio-political divisions. Reconciliation is one of the effectively important prerequisites for realising and sustaining peace and stability in Sudan and Somalia.

The term reconciliation is used in this article largely against the general backdrop of protracted violent civil wars and/or conflicts in Sudan and Somalia. If a process of holistic political reconciliation is encouraged, it is likely that antagonistic relations will be transformed into civic alliances. These in turn will be essential means of dealing with bad pasts as well as setting good foundations for a peaceful future. Reconciliation is used here to mean an act that summons individuals or groups of people to deliberately perform restorative measures that can help to remake broken relations and heal hurting wounds.

Although the conflict in these contexts are specific in nature and degrees of impact on human suffering, reconciliation experts including Dr Charles Villa-Vicencio (Institute of Justice and Reconciliation, Cape Town,

South Africa) argue that the recognition of the past establishes the possibility of reconciliation. Other practitioners maintain that approaching post-conflict recovery from the point of view of reconciliation helps to transform past antagonistic conflicts between individuals, groups, political parties or government enemies into a reciprocal dialogue-oriented state of tolerance, pardon or coexistence.

But how is this scenario possible, especially when the focus of international support for post-war recovery in Sudan and Somalia does not appear to want to address a framework for a holistic reconciliation? Already, there is a positive international community concern to, as it were, accompany the people of Sudan and Somalia in the

in support of post-war reconstruction or recovery. The main concern is post-war recovery of southern Sudan; focusing on the dearth of infrastructure, institutions, development and capacity. However, there is need for the multi-donor trust fund for Sudan to support activities or initiatives that foster actual reconciliation across the Sudanese social and political milieu as a good foundation of sustaining peace.

As for the post-conflict recovery plan for Somalia, donors are discussing the sustainable reconstruction of Somalia. Contributions from the international donor community including the Arab League target a concerted approach to rebuilding Somalia's broken down infrastructure and central government. The European based funding will try to focus on the inclusion of civil society organisations and NGOs in the post-conflict work in Somalia. It appears that funding from the Arab League will go towards addressing the direct implications of re-establishing the Transitional Federal Government and its state organs. But like Sudan, there is need for an international accompaniment in support of

**Donors recently pledged over
4.5 billion US dollars in support of
post-war reconstruction or recovery.**

quest for peace and stability after years of destructive conflicts. For example, donors met recently in Oslo, Norway, and pledged over 4.5 billion US dollars

reconciliation initiatives or activities. Such support is necessary for the fostering of sustainable peace across Somalia!



Youth groups like this one at the Episcopal Cathedral in Yambio in Western Equatoria, southern Sudan, play an important role for the post-war recovery of the country. Photo: Peter Williams/WCC

Reconciliation on all levels

It has been argued that international assistance – whether humanitarian or development aid – provided in [a post-war] setting must deal both with the initial motivating forces of the violence (structural, dynamic or strategic) and with the results of the violence, [such as] destruction, grievance and mistrust (Policy Paper 15: Development and Peace Foundation, December 2000). Notwithstanding, the practical or actual acts of reconciliation involve members of the Sudanese or Somali society who have been embroiled in the conflict. For this reason, there is a need to support the achievement of reconciliation, from the basic social stratum to the national level. Failure to do so may leave forces in place that can re-emerge in new violence.

The drumming up and realisation of adequate international assistance for post-war/conflict reconstruction would categorise Sudan and Somalia as post-war states. However, the best test of post-war recovery is not in the rebuilding of infrastructure. Instead, it lies in people's willingness to pursue

the path of genuine reconciliation and to be reconciled. A good thrust for reconciliation should partly call the peoples of these nations to a responsible acknowledgement of their past bad memory. But it should also partly demand a declaration accompanied by actions that reflect a change of "heart", a deliberate disfavour of old paths of mistrust, hatred and injustices. In essence, society including government must yield to recognise past atrocities.

Such an approach to reconciliation should happen within a given political momentum so that the possibility of reconciliation is not held back. This approach is not a matter of idealistic optimism. Instead, it should be understood in the context of the currently unfolding international support or interest in a state of peace and stability in this region. The call for recognition of bad past memorable events is in itself a democratic struggle. This can help in providing a good basis for curving out ethical moral responsibilities and relationships among and between

conflict parties and the victims of former atrocities.

For Somalia and Sudan, it is impractical not to think of a de-politicised process of reconciliation. However, efforts can be made towards institutionalising the reconciliation initiative into government agendas and policies of post-war/conflict reforms, recovery or reconstruction. Although the administration of justice is unlikely to be free from political gimmicks, it is essential that the search for justice transcends political institutions of government or governance. Instead, these institutions should be developed in a manner that supports the culture of justice and reconciliation.

Reconciliation as an act of necessity is good for harmonious and peaceful human relations. The establishment of solid democratic beginnings in Sudan and Somalia certainly calls for a collective investment by the international community, governments or politicians and citizens in a process of reconciliation that acknowledges and recompenses for past wrongs. This forms a pattern by which historical injustices may be dealt with responsibly.

All categories of citizens have a moral responsibility to recompense for historical injustices committed by officials or groups in Sudan and Somalia. The intention here lies in helping people and their governments to avoid the recurrence of the very reasons (causes) of the conflict that have claimed millions of lives. An unreconciled nation raises uncertainty over the impact of international assistance on post-war/conflict recovery. When genuine reconciliation takes place concurrently with the propped international assistance, there is hope for a good future life and peace in Sudan and Somalia, even the wider Horn of Africa region.

Basil 'Buga Nyama

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Somalia:

Opportunities and stumbling blocks

The two and a half year old process of establishing a Transitional Federal Parliament (TFP) and Government (TFG) for Somalia faces new challenges, as the coming phase will encompass the physical relocation into Somalia. To realize what kind of obstacles the process has to overcome, it is necessary to look at the situation on the ground inside Somalia – but also to take into consideration external factors that might slow down progress.

Within the Somalia Peace Project, carried out by LPI, efforts are made to raise a broad popular engagement in peacebuilding and civic education.

The humanitarian situation in Somalia is precarious, especially in the southern part. Drought and recurrent violent conflicts, as well as severe cases of flooding, put enormous pressure on the conditions for survival. The last months have seen heavy rains, particularly in the north-east (Puntland) and north-west (Somaliland). In central and southern parts of Somalia, the rains have been normal, but heavy rains inside Ethiopia make the Juba and Shabelle rivers swell. The water has destroyed crops and food storage and forced many families to leave their homes. Many areas experience food shortage and reports also tell of growing incidence of waterborne diseases.

The development in neighbouring Ethiopia also has implications on the situation in Somalia. The new Ethiopian restructuring of districts, based on ethnicity as well as the outcome of the recent general elections in the country, could cause frictions along the border

areas and also hamper the peace efforts led by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), a regional organisation comprising Ethiopia, Sudan, Djibouti, Kenya, Uganda, Eritrea and Somalia.

In mid-May the Somali Transitional Federal Parliament voted in favour of two issues:

- They endorsed an earlier resolution from IGAD calling for regional peacekeeping forces to be deployed in Somalia.
- The relocation of the TFP and TFG into Somalia was decided, but for security reasons the two cities of Jowhar and Baidoa were selected instead of Mogadishu.

The decisions made by the Parliament have raised a number of concerns, created confusion and also risk to cause a serious rift, not only within the Parliament but also in the Government.

The voting took place with only

158 out of the 275 MPs present. Some 100 MPs including the Prime Minister were at the time travelling throughout Somalia together with a delegation from the African Union, IGAD, UN, the League of Arab States and other international bodies. These MPs questioned the decision made by the lawmakers located in Nairobi. The majority wanted to relocate to Mogadishu, the old capital. The Prime Minister and his delegation were warmly welcomed as they attended a rally in Mogadishu Soccer Stadium. At the event, an explosion went off killing more than ten people and injuring 40. It is not clear if it was an attack or an accident.

Since then, a lot seems to have happened in and around Mogadishu. A good number of roadblocks have been lifted and the overall security situation has improved a lot. On the other hand, the decision to move TFP and TFG to the two cities mentioned instead of Mogadishu has compelled some militia forces to movements on the ground towards Jowhar and Baidoa, raising tension in that area.

The problems with the decision on deploying peacekeeping forces – said to be as a start some 1 700 troops from Uganda and Sudan – are several. First, the IGAD has no mandate to deploy forces, so this has to be done through the African Union. Second, such a small numbered force cannot do much to stabilize the whole country. And also, at least the Sudanese government has stated that, although ready to intervene, they do not see Somalia as ready for an intervention.

So in fact, the pivotal decisions made by the exiled Parliament in Nairobi

have created a big rift within TFP and TFG, with one 'Mogadishu-camp' and one 'Jowhar/Baidoa-camp'.

well as to Europe and North America. There has also been a trend of rural-urban migration. How could these groups be

mechanism for reconciliation and peace-building on the local level, this seems for an outsider as an overwhelming task.

All important infrastructure is controlled by local militias.

Tired of conflicts

The situation inside Somalia is generally more about poverty, food shortage and humanitarian needs than one of violent conflicts. People in general are tired and fed up after 15 years of constant violent conflicts, and looking forward to the establishment of a parliament and government, however weak and flawed.

Somalian culture has a long-standing tradition of solving low-level conflicts through mediation by councils of elders. However, the last decade's developments with easy access to heavy and light weapons and persisting poverty intensify existing and spark new violent conflicts.

Another issue of concern is that the emerging national/federal structure is in fact a threat against many warlords and militias, who have been making a living because of the poor security situation. With stabilization and the rule of law and order, they might be out of business. Also, different or non-existing perceptions of the meaning of 'federalism' could in fact feed the re-emergence of tribal/clan-based conflicts.

The Relocation Plan and Transitional Charter elaborated by the TFG and TFP have set very high ambitions and a tight timeframe. This also means that expectations from Somalis in general are very high. If the government cannot 'deliver' and meet the expectations, disappointment can lead to strong opposition and even violent conflicts. The issues on the table for the TFG to solve are numerous, such as:

- Big numbers of Somalis have migrated – within the country, to neighbouring countries, as

involved/integrated in the process of building a strong nation?

- Certain regions in Somalia are de facto occupied by clans and/or militias from other regions. How to address this issue?
- Many conflicts and disputes concern access to land to cultivate or to use for grazing, access to water etc. This issue needs a concerted effort to be solved.
- Farmers and businessmen lack access to bigger markets, because of security risks, high costs of transportation etc. What is needed to create a vibrant, open market inside Somalia as well as opportunities for export? As the situation is now, all important infrastructure, such as major roads, bridges, ports, airports etc., is controlled by local militias levying heavy tolls on all goods.
- Also environmental degradation is becoming a major issue of concern. The long coast of Somalia with rich marine resources is being used by foreign interests, leaving devastated fishing grounds and even dumping industrial waste in the area. Akacia trees as well as former banana plantations are chopped down in big numbers in order to produce charcoal for export, leaving barren earth.

Perhaps the most imminent challenge facing the federal institutions is the Herculean task of creating viable local and district councils for governance and administration throughout Somalia within 60 days. Without a proper

Somalia Peace Project

To that end, the Life & Peace Institute (LPI) was entrusted by the Swedish government to carry out a project in the areas of reconciliation and peace-building, entitled the Somalia Peace Project (SPP). This project aims to increase the participation of the Somali people in the peacebuilding process in general, to enable them to identify with the new government and to be able to benefit from the resultant institutional structures. In other words, there should be a broad engagement by the people in peacebuilding and targeted civic education, which should in turn combine all tracks and levels of reconciliation – local, regional and national – while stressing popular participation in the peace process. This will be done through facilitation and training in tools for nonviolent conflict resolution, peacebuilding and reconciliation.

However, in order to initiate the project as a whole, there is a preliminary need to carry out a macro analysis within Somalia. This activity is referred to as the Situational & Conflict Assessment. Following this, potential target areas should come to the fore in light of this assessment. The aim with this activity is to attain preliminary information of a general nature before carrying out a more specific and thematic peace and conflict analysis of specific target areas.

In short, the main objectives with the SPP are to do an assessment of an approach where reconciliation and peacebuilding initiatives carried out on a community level can be linked to the national level, through working with the Transitional Federal Parliament, as well as with local governmental authorities and other stakeholders, such as civil society, the business community and the media. Moreover, there is a need to plan and carry out facilitation of a

learning process in reconciliation and peacebuilding for the Transitional Federal Parliament.

In the event of deteriorating levels of security, it has been decided that this should not detract from overall project implementation, as LPI feels that the need for a concrete and relevant strategy of conflict transformation has never been more pronounced as it is now in Somalia. However, it remains to be seen whether even this itself is an operational possibility in the short-term. The more the members of the TFP clash violently – as they have done in Baidoa recently – the more the chances for progress recede.

Carl Söderlind & Shane Quinn

Tsunami hits troubled Somalia

Rolling through the Indian Ocean at nearly 805 km an hour, the tsunami that originated in Southeast Asian waters on 26 December had retained much of its destructive energy by the time it hit Africa, wiping out entire villages along the Somali coastline.

Abdigani Karshe was walking along the sand dunes of a small village named Kulub, just outside the coastal town of Garacad, more than 200 km from Geroowe, the capital of the semi-autonomous region of Puntland, in the Mudug area of central Somalia. It was just nearing noon on an average day for his Global Fishing Company.

“One of my workers was waving his hands about some waves,” Karshe said. “Suddenly there were three men running from the sea, and 20 seconds later there was a huge wave coming fast.”

The waves, local officials told IRIN, came at four distinct intervals, splashing water up to three kilometers inland. Two people who were on the beach were crushed to death.

Garacad is a major fishing industry centre. Ships from the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean trawl the waters off its coast,



A solidarity visit and fact finding mission to Somalia was facilitated by LPI/Horn of Africa Programme after the tsunami. The Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, the Most Rev. Njongonkulu Ndungane, representatives of SACC and FECCLAHA participated in the delegation. Photo: Johan Svensson, LPI/HAP

collecting seafood for markets in the Middle East and Africa.

While there were no accurate figures for the missing in either Kulub or Garacad, local sources told IRIN six people in Garacad, including children, lost their lives to the 26 December incident. The tsunami damaged 15 businesses in the town which employed nearly 3,400 people. According to local and regional officials, the livelihoods of 780 families – around 4,800 people – were affected. In the semi-autonomous region of Puntland, around 100,000 people were estimated by local leaders to be struggling to recover from the disaster.

Governmental assistance

The deputy minister for health of the new Somali transitional government and the chairman of the Joint Emergency Disaster and Management Committee, Osman Dufle, appealed to the international community to aid the tsunami-affected people. He spoke during an assessment mission to the northern and southern coasts from 14 to 17 January.

The assessment team visited Hafun

Peninsula in Puntland, Garacad and areas south of Mogadishu. Energy minister, Mohamed Bakar, who led the mission to Garacad, said that the new Somali government was keen to assist the people of Somalia in every way possible.

“The children are suffering,” one local elder said. “Our way of life was changed within hours. What do we do when we have nothing? How can we survive when our boats have been wiped out, our living shelters damaged?”

Health-associated conditions ranged from acute respiratory infections to diarrhoea and eyesores, which are all aggravated by a lack of health services, the report continued. Families living along the coastline lost boats, equipment, housing, cooking utensils, foodstuff, clothes and sleeping materials.

In Hafun Peninsula, which was most affected, an estimated four thousand displaced people will have to relocate from where they used to live because the massive waves altered the coastline. Their homes, which were formerly protected from the high tide by large sand dunes, were swept away by the tsunami.

The Republic of Congo: Need for peace after forgotten war

The two Congo states, the Democratic Republic of Congo (Kinshasa) and the Republic of Congo (Brazzaville), are both struggling with what could be at best called a post-war situation, but with a constant threat of new eruptions of violence. While massive amounts of information are available on DRC, very little is, however, written on Brazzaville.

A visit by the Swedish parliamentarians to both Congo states, arranged by the Life & Peace Institute, offered an opportunity to also highlight the case of the Republic of Congo, thus somewhat correcting this imbalance. In this article LPI Programme Officer Jérôme Gouzou presents an overview of the political situation in the country.

Following the adoption, by referendum in January 2002, of a new Constitution, tailored by and for President Sassou Nguesso, general elections were held in the Republic of Congo in March and May-June 2002. The project for and adoption of a new Constitution had already triggered both mixed feelings and harsh criticism. Several provisions in the new Constitution (the seventh since Independence) indeed strengthen the power of the President

disqualified Sassou's most serious opponents.

Moreover, the conditions in which the referendum took place aroused massive criticism from local as well as international human rights organisations. Not surprisingly, the general elections met with the same fate: direct threats to opposition candidates (especially towards the candidates to the parliamentary elections, many of them being

stations, unfair distribution of ballots, etc. The results talk for themselves:

- Sassou was elected President with 89.4 percent of the votes (his major rival, Kignoumbi Kia Mbougou of the Union Panafricaine pour la Démocratie Sociale (UPADS) obtaining 2.8 percent)
- In the parliamentary elections, the Forces Démocratiques Unifiées (FDU) (this grouping is a coalition of Sassou's party, the Parti Congolais du Travail (PCT), and several other, smaller parties), gained a comfortable majority of seats (around 55 percent of the total, but their influence is stronger if one takes into account the rather large numbers of seats won by 29 other small political formations that by a majority are backing Sassou (25 percent of the total). The main opposition parties gained ten seats together (6.5 percent of the total).

Global political reconciliation

One possible solution to the continuous threat of renewed conflict and endless suffering for the population in Congo would be a global political reconciliation among the main protagonists of the past armed-conflicts: the actual President Denis Sassou Nguesso, former President Pascal Lissouba and former Prime Minister Bernard Kolelas. It has been suggested by many observers and specialists of the Congo, but also by several prominent political personalities of the country, that this process has unfortunately not been fully instituted yet. To achieve this, President Sassou

People who had left their villages and lived in the forest are eventually returning to their homes.

and include dangerous discriminatory clauses regarding the profile of potential candidates to the presidential election. By doing so, it automatically

“advised” not to run the second round), lack of transparency when the votes were being counted, presence of the military at the polling

Nguesso would have to annul the charges, which he himself promulgated, against the former politicians, allow them to return to Congo, and engage them in political dialogue. The political power in place in Brazzaville has nevertheless not yet shown any open and clear interest in such a solution, putting forward the risk of renewed political violence that a comeback might entail.

An armed conflict, almost totally forgotten by the western media, has been going on in the Republic of Congo from 1998 up to March 2003. Confined to the Pool region (including the capital Brazzaville), it opposed the governmental forces to the Ninja militia led by a charismatic and somehow mystical Lari, "Pasteur" Ntoumi. The latter is also a contested leader of the *Conseil National de Résistance*, which is an organisation created by the military commanders and political leaders of the 1998-1999 civil resistance against the imposition of state authority in southern Congo.

Initially backing the former Prime Minister and Mayor of Brazzaville, Bernard Kolelas, the Ninja militia, from units that refused to swear allegiance to Ntoumi, had fallen back to the Pool region, where it carried on guerrilla warfare. Both warring parties signed a ceasefire agreement in March 2003 in Brazzaville, but no comprehensive peace process has been started since then, and Pasteur Ntoumi is still living in the forest with his soldiers who have not yet been demobilised or disarmed. A series of complex and rather opaque negotiations has taken place during the last two years, but the outcome is still very uncertain.

Although limited to a rather minor scale compared to previous civil wars in Congo, this conflict has nevertheless had tremendous consequences for the population. The humanitarian situation is still serious in the Pool region. People who had left their villages and lived in the forest in very critical sanitary and health conditions are eventually returning to their homes. Moreover,

every alert in the southern neighbourhoods of Brazzaville triggers panic with people fleeing their homes in massive numbers and search for a safer place in

particularly in relation to the Catholic side. It is one of their major objectives to introduce Christianity as a mobilising identity.

One possible solution to the threat of renewed conflict and endless suffering would be a global political reconciliation.

other quarters or in the forest outside town. Although there are no reliable figures, an important number of people are reported to have left Brazzaville, heading to other safer urban centres like Pointe Noire on the coast.

Strong communal cleavages

What might be even more alarming are the tensions within Sassou's camp. This issue is very sensitive, but of the highest importance, because it is moulding a great part of the contemporary political arena in Congo. It deals with internal contradictions, conflicts and struggle for power within the so-called "North Camp".

Rooted in the colonial period under French rule, the myth of a north-south opposition emerged on the political arena during the 1959 conflict. Since then, most political leaders, using regional and ethnic identities as gathering and mobilisation means, have managed to consolidate this myth. However, during the 1994 civil war, Lissouba's and Kolela's forces clashed on a regular basis, which introduced a more complicated picture, as both leaders originated from the south (Lissouba is from the Niari region, and Kolela is from the Pool). The on-going tensions within Sassou's camp strengthen this complex picture.

A solution would be to transform the consciousness of the Congolese population, so that other identities might supplant the actual dominant ethnic and regionalist identity. In that respect, this is how church involvement for peace can be understood,

The political life is characterized by a great intensity for the first time since the period of the National Sovereign Conference in 1991-1992. Two main factors are responsible for this, the first of which being the exile of the historical and charismatic leaders of the opposition (Lissouba, Kolélas and Opango) and a new wave of renovation within the PCT .

The exile of these leaders has created tensions within their respective parties. Simply put, their absence has triggered a leadership vacuum, which in turn has led to the rise of personal ambitions from some of their former lieutenants. None of their parties has yet officially split, but they are highly divided between those who remain faithful to the historical leaders in exile and those who see an opportunity for taking the leadership of the parties. This is mainly the case for the UPADS and the MCDDI (*Mouvement Congolais pour la Démocratie et le Développement Intégral*). This is both a healthy process of democratisation within the political parties and a factor of further division, and thus weakening, of the political opposition.

The Congolese leaders of the opposition are aware of this risk, and have tried to hide it behind the creation of a new political platform, the Code A (*Coordination de l'Opposition pour une Alternance Démocratique*). Initially planned to gather all political parties of the opposition, it failed to do so, mainly because of the internal divisions within each of the main parties. There is now another platform called Codesa

(*Convention pour la Démocratie et le Salut*), headed by André Milongo, leader of the *Union pour la Démocratie et la République*. These two platforms have organised a series of public meetings, which have attracted some popular support (there is a well-spread social animosity aimed at the actual regime and the poor standard of living in Congo). However, their internal divisions hamper them in their plans of presenting a serious threat to the Sassou regime.

A very interesting phenomenon in the political life of Congo is the new wave of renovation within the PCT. As mentioned earlier, tensions between hardliners and renovators have always been at the origin of an often-violent power shift. In essence, power at the party level, essentially meant power at the country level. Although the period

of a single-party ruling has been over since the beginning of the 1990s, the PCT is still, and by far, the most powerful party in the country as well as remaining the ruling one. In other words, controlling the party is still necessary to control the political power in Congo. The actual, and sometimes violent, debate is officially about a renovation of the ideological line of the party. This would, in effect, oppose those who believe that it should keep its socialist profile to those who think that, as times are changing, the PCT should pursue a social democratic line.

However, what is at stake is more profound and is of immense importance for the fragile peace in the country. Since President Sassou officially took sides in favour of a renovation, the conservatives have gathered around them those who are disappointed by

Sassou's regime. There is, indeed, a strong bitterness among the barons of the regime, as well as among the former militias, who both won the war for Sassou but who feel more and more excluded from the political power, who have the feeling that they have not been rewarded enough for their war efforts, and who start to openly and severely criticize the clan-like derivation of Sassou's regime. The issue of renovation is no longer a matter of ideology, but a political fight for power. Many observers fear that this camp for the control of the PCT might just as well be a repetition of history, and eventually lead to a violent shift of power. President Sassou might indeed be playing a very uncertain and risky game for his political future.

Jérôme Gouzou

Swedish parliamentarians visit the two Congo states

At the end of February, the Life & Peace Institute (LPI) arranged a visit of six Swedish parliamentarians from four political parties to the Republic of Congo and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The journey was organised in collaboration with the Swedish NGO Diakonia, the Swedish Embassy in Kinshasa and the Congolese Ambassador in the Nordic Countries, His Excellency Mr. André Hombessa.

The objectives of the field visit in these two countries, where Sweden has had a meaningful involvement over a long period, were manifold. First of all, this ten-day trip was meant to increase the understanding of the political situation in Central Africa among Swedish parliamentarians. Through its programme, the Swedish parliamentarians got the opportunity to study the situation in the two countries and discuss with local parliamentarians the prominent role of the Congolese parliaments in their peace building and democratisation efforts.

Moreover, the journey gave a possibility for meeting and exchanging with Swedish NGOs involved in both Congo states, as well as for better understanding of the role and vision of international actors on the ground (United Nations, the European Union). Finally, the trip was an occasion to share LPI's experience of working in the region, as the Institute has developed conflict transformation programmes in both Congo states, with offices in Brazzaville and Bukavu (eastern DRC).

In the *Democratic Republic of Congo*, the Swedish parliamentarians took a special interest in studying and exchanging views on the specific role of a parliament as a lawmaker, a guarantor for the national unity in a volatile transitional period. In this context, the democratic perspectives and elections in Congo were discussed with high-level representatives from the Transitional Government.

The parliamentarians also visited the eastern part of the country (Kivu provinces), where local, national and

regional conflicting dynamics meet and make the peace process very fragile. In this region the journey offered an opportunity of special interest to the Swedish visitors to learn about the role, the working procedures and the achievements of the UN as a peacemaker, as Sweden is a major financial contributor to its mission in DRC.

In the *Republic of Congo* an exchange of ideas took place about the specific role of the Congolese parliament in strengthening democracy in a weak state. The ongoing peacebuilding and reconciliation process was discussed with high-level representatives from the Congolese government. An important aspect of the peacebuilding, reconciliation and citizenship-strengthening programmes is the active involvement of local civil society organisations, with whom the Swedish parliamentarians got an opportunity to meet. The visiting group also met the European Union Embassy to discuss their role in a post-conflict situation in a weak state.

Religion - a tool for peace in Africa

The Second Summit of the Inter-faith Action for Peace in Africa was a colourful, intermingling and fruitful meeting-place for people representing a number of the world religions and most parts of the African continent. Dr Yacob Tesfai from LPI/Horn of Africa Programme reports that the conference expressed the belief that “peace is possible in Africa”, a vision that needs to be transformed into action.

Women flocked from all sides. They were colourful and elegant. They were entering, nay invading, the audience hall. They had taken the scene by storm. But the most eloquent and unmistakable signal of their entry was the cry – the shrill, unsettling, scary, disturbing and unnerving cry. It filled the hall to the extent that one could not escape from being pierced by it. It was a mother’s cry for a healthy Africa!

This was the dramatic way in which the women of Africa inaugurated the Second Summit of the Inter-faith Action for Peace in Africa, which was held 21-25 April, 2005, in Benoni (near Johannesburg) in South Africa. They had earlier been participants at “the Mothers and Daughters of Africa” pre-summit meeting, which brought them together from all over the continent and beyond.

Organized by the Lutheran World Federation, the summit had brought together about 250 participants hailing from the four corners of the African continent. It was only the representatives from Somalia who could not make it. There were also other observers from sister organizations and donor agencies from Canada, Finland, Iceland, the USA and Switzerland.

The first summit was held at the same place 14-19 October, 2002. It

came up with the Johannesburg Inter-faith Peace Declaration entitled Embracing the Gift of Peace (see *New Routes* 4/2002). The participants of the summit declared that they would commit themselves “to interfaith dialogues” and joint work for peace on the basis of the various religious traditions to which they adhere. They also asserted boldly: “We believe that peace is possible in Africa”.

Mothers and daughters of Africa

When one looks at the second summit as a whole, there are a number of elements which shine out as its powerful features.

The women’s presentation: “The mothers and daughters of Africa” presented the report of their pre-summit meeting in a dramatic manner. As well as the shrill cry referred to above, they held up banners which proclaimed loud and clear the values to which they held dear and the injustices against which they are fighting and intend to continue to fight. They were at the same time calling for solidarity from the men of Africa. The women’s presentation also highlighted the fact that women and children are often the most vulnerable victims of violent conflicts.

Variety of religions: The conference brought together adherents of a number of different religions: African Traditional Religion, the Baha’i faith, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism and Rastafari. The latter came all the way from the African Diaspora in Jamaica. The representatives of these religions prayed together each in their own faith tradition, they lived and acted in their own traditional ways. Even in the face of this difference, however, they interacted in healthy and meaningful ways. People somehow found ways and means of working together even in the midst of differences. This is manifested in the various ways in which the representatives collaborated and cooperated to address many situations of conflict in the continent.

Joint visits: Some of the most striking cooperative efforts were the joint visits undertaken by selected groups to different conflict areas. The visits were aimed as fact-finding missions, expressions of solidarity with the suffering and as possible contributors to peacebuilding. The visiting teams were composed of representatives of different faith groups. The visits targeted selected conflict areas like the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Liberia, the Sudan and Uganda. In these conflict areas, the teams met with leaders of opposition groups as well as ordinary people and collected as much information as possible on the prevailing situation of violent conflict. Some of the reports that were delivered at the conference were extremely graphic and painful indeed.

By all accounts, one witnesses the fact that the visits were well received by the people in the conflict areas. The positive effect was further seen in the fact that delegates of a number of



Some of the 250 participants in the Second Summit of the Inter-faith Action for Peace in Africa. Photo: LWF/Andreas Vlachakis

countries which feared that violent conflicts may erupt in their respective countries were pleading and calling for similar visits to be undertaken in their countries as well. In the reports of visits the wounds of many conflict-ridden areas were open for all to see. The desperate cries for help were there for all to hear.

The only part of Africa which did not figure out in all these activities was the Horn of Africa. It was conspicuous by its silence. There seemed to be a tacit agreement that the topic was taboo. There were open forums on most parts of Africa. Representatives of many countries in a given region, like West Africa, for example, discussed the problems confronting their regions and hinted on possible solutions. Even though a time slot was given for a possible discussion of the Horn of Africa region, nothing of the kind took place. This was a clear sign that the problems of the Horn still remain intractable and difficult to handle.

Mingling in the corridors

Lectures and panel discussions: There were

also a number of lectures, which probed deeply into particular problems, and issues that have to do with violent conflicts and their consequences. There was one that highlighted the plight of children under the topic “conflict in Africa and its impact on children;” another on “development and peace in Africa”, yet another on “working together for peace in Africa: racism, religion and dialogue”. These were augmented by panel discussions on a variety of topics: Use and abuse of Holy Scriptures with respect to conflict, Inter-faith dialogue and community-based peace-making, and The role of the media in the context of inter-faith action for peace in Africa. *The corridor chats:* A very important aspect of the summit was the intermingling of adherents of a variety of religious traditions. This mixture was not only visible in the auditorium but especially outside it. In this corner, one could observe people from Rwanda, the DRC, Kenya, Senegal and the Ivory Coast, engaged in a deep discussion how to solve the violent conflict that is rocking the DRC. In another corner, people from Tunisia, Uganda, Sierra

Leone and Liberia were locked in a lively discussion on the merits/demerits of polygamy, the various faces of Islam and the problems of modernity. That was one aspect of the healthy exchange of ideas that was taking place in virtually all the corners of the venue of the summit.

The Summit manifesto: At the end of the conference, the summit came up with what was called the (Ekurhuleni) Kopanong Manifesto under the title “Working together for peace in Africa”. Some of the high points of the manifesto may be listed as follows:

- While recognizing the difficulties, there is a manifest confidence in the capacity of the adherents of the various religions represented to positively influence the process of peace in Africa.
- There is a need for a spiritual approach to resolving conflicts which has so far been conspicuous by its absence.

- The growth of inter-faith engagement in Africa is acknowledged. It is affirmed that “a continental approach to inter-faith work for peace is beginning to gain momentum”.

- A call is made to increase networking and linkages to enhance action on national, regional and international levels, to conduct research, liaise with governments and NGOs and other international organizations.

- It was recommended that a commission be created to act as a forum for follow-up of discussion and action as well as a small secretariat.

- Strengthen women’s participation and contribution to peace.

As the second summit came to an end, the belief expressed in the first summit reverberates: “We believe that peace is possible in Africa.” It is certainly time to remain faithful to the faith, vision and conviction that gave rise to it and to continue the concerted action which is needed to make it a reality, so that the cry of the mothers and daughters of Africa will cease at last and be replaced by the ululation of joy!

Yacob Tesfai

The two-state paradox

The time to establish a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is rapidly running out, says Gershon Baskin in this article. In the situation of today it is impossible to imagine that negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority could succeed. Both parties to the conflict as well as the international community have to show a real political will to ensure a continued peace process.

Among those of us who are concerned about the need to see an Israeli-Palestinian peace process actually taking place, there is great fear that we are moving toward the third intifada. The concerned parties include those of us who have made great efforts to study and understand the many reasons for the failure of the Oslo peace process. Our collective assessment is that there seems to be a general lack of political will among all to make the decisions necessary to ensure that a real peace process emerges.

Israel is too burdened by the disengagement to pay any attention to the “day after”, and recent analyses of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon’s strategy seem to lend support to the idea that he has no real intention of entering into a negotiated process with the Palestinians. His agenda seems to be focused on possible further Israeli unilateral steps.

The Palestinians are busy trying to advance political, security and economic reforms that concur with their road map responsibilities. The Palestinian Authority has made it clear that it opposes the idea of a Palestinian state within provisional borders as another interim agreement. The Palestinian leadership fears that there will be no advances beyond another interim agreement and they believe Sharon is setting a permanent border through the completion of the separation barriers.

The US has apparently agreed not to advance any new negotiations as long as Israel is carrying out the disengagement plans. There is no real pressure coming from Washington on Israel regarding outposts or settlements. Israel understands the message that it can continue expanding settlements on the Israeli side of the separation barrier. The other members of the Quartet (the Middle East Quartet comprises the United States, the Russian Federation, the European Union and the United Nations) have been virtually silent in the last months. Even the high-profile visit by Russian President Vladimir Putin to the region did not really convince anyone that the Quartet is an effective body for mediating the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The Quartet should be meeting to plan present and future steps. It should be insisting on monitors and verifiers on the ground to ensure Israeli and Palestinian compliance with their road map obligations. It should already be discussing and planning for the creation of the Palestinian State in Phase II of the road map. None of this is happening.

Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas’ visit to Washington was the first good news in a long time. We must applaud President George W. Bush’s agreement to the Palestinian leader’s insistence that Israel cease all settlement activity, including in Jerusalem, and that the Palestinian

territories retain the possibility of contiguity, including a real link between Gaza and the West Bank. We must celebrate Bush’s understanding that this is the only way to achieve peace.

Permanent state negotiations

The Palestinian leadership has apparently come to a decision that if there is an option to create a Palestinian state with provisional borders in the road map, then, by logic, there is also a real option *not* to create a Palestinian state with provisional borders. Their preferred option is to go directly to permanent status negotiations. They claim that the issues are all known and that the parameters of peace are also known. These include a Palestinian state in 22 percent of the Mandatory borders of Palestine (based on the 1967 lines with agreed-upon territorial exchanges on a one-to-one basis), the Palestinian neighborhoods of east Jerusalem as the capital of the Palestinian state, the Haram a Sharif/ Temple Mount under Palestinian sovereignty, and with the Western Wall, Jewish Quarter and the Jewish neighborhoods of east Jerusalem under Israeli sovereignty, and a practical solution to the refugee problem based on UN General Assembly Resolution 194, with most of the refugees settling in the Palestinian state but Israel acknowledging historical responsibility for the refugee problem.

The Palestinians say it is not practical to speak of a state with “attributes of sovereignty,” as stated in the road map; they understand this to mean “severe limitations on the sovereignty of the Palestinian state.” They assert they will accept any limitations on their sovereignty that Israel would also be willing to accept. The Palestinians demand full control over their air space,



The wall of separation. Israel says it is needed to prevent suicide bombers from crossing over into Israel. Palestinians say the barrier is separating farmers from their land and children from their school. Photo: EAPPI/Jeremy Routledge

land and water resources, external borders, etc.

It seems impossible today to imagine that negotiations between Israel and the PA under these terms could succeed. Even if Sharon was willing to enter into negotiations now, which he is not, and even if the US, together with the other members of the Quartet, were to play the role of honest and evenhanded broker, which they are not, there is, practically speaking, no chance that such negotiations could produce an Israeli-Palestinian agreement.

In recent Israeli-Palestinian talks I participated in a very strange paradox appeared. The Israelis involved, not all of them left-wingers, were trying to

convince the Palestinians to accept a Palestinian state now, and the Palestinians were saying that they weren't at all sure they wanted a Palestinian state now. Some of the Palestinians who participated in the discussions were Palestinian Authority officials. The parameters that the Israelis spoke about included a Palestinian state with provisional borders covering about 90 percent of the West Bank and 100 percent of Gaza, with an agreed link between the two areas. It included a Palestinian capital in the Palestinian neighborhoods of east Jerusalem, but left the issue of the Old City of Jerusalem and the refugee issue off

the agenda until permanent status negotiations were held at a later time.

Most of the Palestinians basically rejected the idea. The Israelis did their utmost to convince them of the logic of creating a situation whereby future negotiations on the final issues would take place on a state-to-state basis. It was clear that many people on the Palestinian side were reconsidering the viability of a Palestinian state with provisional borders on less than 22 percent of the Mandatory borders of the land, and with limited sovereignty.

Israeli plans to build in the E1 area connecting Ma'aleh Adumim to Jerusalem are viewed by Palestinians as the final deathblow to the viability of a Palestinian state. If this plan is implemented, I see it as Israel disconnecting the north and the south of the West Bank and detaching Jerusalem from its Palestinian hinterlands. The territorial contiguity that President George W. Bush speaks about would no longer be possible in reality without engineering all kinds of tunnels and bridges that the Palestinians completely reject.

Under this scenario, Palestinians say: Let us forget about the two-state solution and let Israelis continue to expand and take more of our land. Within a very short time it will become clear to the international community that there is no longer such an option and the world will eventually impose the one, binational state solution on Israel. This was the original Palestinian preference anyway.

As the creation of the Palestinian state is becoming more a part of the Israeli strategic vision, it is losing its appeal on the Palestinian side. The time clock on the two-state solution is definitely ticking; the question is, will time run out before it is implemented. And if that happens, what remains of peace options for ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?

Gershon Baskin

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LPI News

Bukavu news

The LPI Bukavu staff is very sorry to inform you that our driver/mechanic Tabia Makasa Prosper passed away on the 13th of February 2005. He has been a loyal employee, the best mechanic in the region, and a very respectable person. We do miss him dearly but are thankful to have had the privilege to have known and worked with him. We wish his family members and friends all the courage they need.

In June 2004 thousands of people fled Bukavu because of the uprising insecurity, and members of the Banyamulenge community have had difficulties to come back to the city ever since. One of our guards though, Thomas, who was based in a refugee camp across the Rwandan border, had the courage to come back as one of the first and has been in Bukavu since the end of January without any problems. Our programme assistant Tharcisse Kayira, who also had to leave Bukavu and is more known on different levels, visited Bukavu end of April for the first time. His visit meant a lot for all of LPI, his community and other peace actors, because we hope it is the beginning of the process of peaceful return and reintegration of the Banyamulenge within the Congolese society.

LPI at Kirchentag

Anne Kubai attended the big church conference Kirchentag in Hannover, Germany, in May. She was invited to a panel discussion on Christian-Muslim relations in Africa, following the presentation by Professor Klaus Hock from the Theological Faculty of Rostock University, Germany.

LPI joins ecumenical umbrella in Sweden

LPI has been accepted as a member of the Swedish Mission Council (SMC), an umbrella organisation for some 30 church-related development agencies

in Sweden. The SMC provides support and initiates reflection and capacity building for its members. SMC also administers Sida applications for humanitarian and development projects on behalf of its members.

Evaluation in Rwanda ...

LPI research director Anne Kubai has together with Ingrid Samset from Chr. Michelsen Institute in Norway, carried out an evaluation of the Released Prisoners Project's contribution to reconciliation in Rwanda. The evaluation exercise was carried out in February and March and the report has been presented to Norwegian Church Aid.

... and in Ethiopia



Johan Svensson, regional representative for LPI in the Horn of Africa, recently participated in an evaluation of the Peace Office of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus.

Condolences

The Life & Peace Institute would like to present its condolences to the family of the late Tata Mbama, President of the Eglise Evangélique du Congo, who died on 19 May 2005. Tata Mbama has through the years been a close friend of the LPI, and his personal involvement and commitment to peace in his country is of great importance.

Journalists in Brazzaville request support from LPI

Work with media and journalists is part of the LPI peacebuilding programme in Congo Brazzaville since some years. In a recent application, expectations on support for the coming years are expressed from the Observatoire Congolaise des Medias, a structure formed to observe the role of media and to provide training for journalists. LPI is hoping to receive support for this particular element from church-related media in Sweden and Finland. Says programme officer Jérôme Gouzou, "Journalists and media play a very important role in conflict and peace. The training we have been able to initiate and the observer function, a Mediaombudsman, start to show concrete results in terms of more responsible journalism."

Book and library fair

LPI will present itself at Göteborg International Book Fair 29 September–2 October. In addition to presenting this journal *New Routes*, LPI will participate in a seminar on post-war peacebuilding in the Sudan.

Small arms study

In February, the LPI was commissioned to participate in an ongoing study by the UN Institute of Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) aimed at assessing the capacities of the European Union (EU) to respond to problems caused by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW). While the study is examining this issue in broad theoretical and international perspectives, the LPI was asked to specifically examine the SALW issue in the Horn of Africa.

The final report submitted by the LPI was in three parts. The first gave an overview of the theoretical underpinnings of recent research into the SALW issue and how it can be seen as part of a broader human security

agenda. The report then examined the Horn of Africa and the various factors leading to a heightening of SALW proliferation pressure in the region. Finally, an assessment was made of current EU and EU member state approaches to responding to the SALW problem in the Horn of Africa. The report concluded with a series of recommendations that the LPI hopes will help

guide future EU policies towards SALW.

The LPI report was based on research conducted both in the Uppsala and the Nairobi offices. Research in Uppsala was led by Project Ploughshares intern Darryl Whitehead, Canada, who also wrote the final report. Yacob Tesfai at the LPI Horn of Africa Programme supported

Darryl's work with further research and advice.

The UNIDIR study is now going through all of the submitted documents in order to prepare its own recommendations to the EU. In the meantime, LPI is considering reformatting its report in order to provide an abridged version in the next issue of *New Routes*.

Reviews and Resources

Tricky road to reconciliation

Eric Stover and Harvey M Weinstein (eds): *My Neighbor, My Enemy. Justice and Community in the Aftermath of Mass Atrocity.* Cambridge University Press, 2004

Antonia Chayes and Martha Minow (eds): *Imagine coexistence. Restoring Humanity After Violent Conflict.* PON Books/Jossey-Bass, 2003

Reconciliation After Violent Conflict. A Handbook. IDEA, 2003

Desmond Tutu: *No Future Without Forgiveness.* Image, 2003

Michael Ignatieff: *Warrior's Honour. Ethnic War and the Modern Conscience.* Daidalos, 1999

-They showed me different knives and told me to choose which they would use to cut his throat off. My boy just said: mummy, mummy, plea... Then there was silence.

An article about reconciliation has to begin in the irreconcilable. It must begin with Vernesa, let's call her that, whom I met in a cold room in the outskirts of Sarajevo and who told me her story as a reply to my questions about the reconciliation process in Bosnia, while the electric heater was hissing and buzzing

and while the cigarette-ends were piling up on the ashtray.

Reconciliation is a word that increasingly often bounces to and fro in the international development debate. The modern type of civil war, where the majority of both victims and perpetrators are civilians, makes it necessary to find a way of continued co-existence after the noise of war has ceased. It is a fragile process – half of all terminated conflicts arise again within a period of ten years, and the spiral of violence, revenge and more violence spins faster and faster. To break the destructive development, the international community supports reconciliation efforts at different levels in society, for example, truth commissions, war tribunals and local reconciliation projects. The Swedish International Development Authority, Sida, gives financial support to about 200 conflict handling projects around the world, of which about twenty deal specifically with reconciliation.

But what, exactly, is reconciliation? In the growing amount of literature on the subject there is a cautious consensus that it is a process that can take place simultaneously on different levels in society, a process that cannot be externally directed. To establish a common, official truth about the crimes that have been committed is regarded to be an important aspect. The world has embraced the idea of truth commissions with enthusiasm. Ten have been set up in the last decade alone.

The leading star is the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which was met with great attention. "Forgive but not forget" was the call of the former Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who chaired the commission. The whole world watched with wonder as South Africans flocked to the meetings of the commission to take part in what seemed to be a cleansing ritual on an individual as well as on a societal level.

Those who did not join in this drama, for example the relatives of the torture victim Steve Biko, who demanded punishment for the perpetrators and compensation for their suffering, became trouble-makers. But afterwards there was growing criticism, and the appeal to "forgive" is by many seen as an insult. Can a truth commission be anything but an empty ritual when people are still living with the consequences of the crimes of apartheid? When focus is on individual perpetrators' apologies, the contours of the fundamental social structure become surprisingly invisible: that apartheid was a system from which white South Africans collectively benefited.

Another type of institution that appears in reconciliation literature is the war crime tribunals, such as the War Crimes Tribunal for former Yugoslavia in the Hague, the War Crimes Tribunal for Rwanda in Arusha and the recently established permanent war crimes tribunal, ICC (International Criminal Court). These courts work to administer justice and to some extent establish a historical truth about committed

crimes. Thereby, according to their advocates, they contribute to make the basis of a reconciliation process. There is no doubt that the tribunals have developed the concepts of international justice, but whether the work of the courts has contributed to reconciliation processes is doubtful.

Recent studies show that a deep rift has opened between the tribunals and people on the local level in Ex-Yugoslavia and in Rwanda. What has been forgotten is that the objective truth about war events and the responsibility for them is one thing, and the interpretation of the events is another. Certainly, the material of the tribunals may make up an invaluable document in the future, but the role they play in today's reconciliation process seems to be one of further strengthening the antagonism in already divided societies.

There are also many projects for reconciliation on a local and individual level. Here, too, work has often been slow as a consequence of lack of understanding for the link between the individual and the societal process. This can be illustrated by a development project in a small town in Bosnia. In conversation groups people from "the opposite side" listened to each others' stories about suffering and horror. The participants were attracted to go there with the help of income generating activities. But the day the project money was used up, people also stopped coming. The well-meaning attempts to make people reconcile on an individual level had no anchorage in everyday life, where the whole social structure counteracts such a process. The fact that the project leaders did not have any training whatsoever in handling post-traumatic stress meant that no improvements were made on the individual level either. On the contrary, it may even have got worse.

The Canadian author and professor Michael Ignatieff has in his analysis of modern wars used James Joyce's metaphor that history is a nightmare from which we cannot wake up. In

countries that have been shaken by violent events, the past does not belong to the by-gones. And as long as there is no dividing line between past and present, it is meaningless to speak about reconciliation. Vernesa has lived for twelve years since her son was murdered. But he dies again and again. He dies now, here in this cold little room, where she is crying.

Later I ask her what must happen for her to be able to even imagine any common future together with the former enemies in her country. She says she longs for an opportunity to earn some money. She wants to be able to return to her hometown without fear of meeting her torturers, who are now at liberty. She wants recognition that crimes have been committed against her, space to speak about her sorrow, and she wishes there was a grave which she could visit.

None of this is possible in today's Bosnia, but Vernesa's wishes indicate that simple building stones, like food for the day and personal security, must be part of the work for reconciliation. And maybe the most important insight about the arduous work to build "a common future from a divided past" is that it takes time. That it takes decades, perhaps generations, until the most basic prerequisites of reconciliation are fulfilled.

Meanwhile we must listen with great respect to people living their daily lives in an environment where they risk meeting war criminals when they go to the bakery.

Johanna Mannergren Selimovic
Translated by Kristina Lundqvist

Peace actors in Sri Lanka

Camilla Orjuela: Civil Society in Civil War. Peace Work and Identity Politics in Sri Lanka. Department of Peace and Development Research, Göteborg University, 2004

Recent research has showed that civil society can play an important role in conflict situations. But in spite of this recognition of the local processes going on alongside international peace negotiations, our knowledge about "civil society" is still superficial, and the concept of "civil society" runs the risk of becoming a static empty phrase.

Therefore Camilla Orjuela makes an important effort with her dissertation *Civil Society in Civil War - Peace Work and Identity Politics in Sri Lanka*, where she investigates the local peace actors in Sri Lanka. By exposing the controversies within the Sri Lankan peace movement, Orjuela manages to problemise the concept and thereby create a deeper, more concrete understanding of the role that small-scale peace work can play in a peace process.

In her dissertation Camilla Orjuela shows that the dynamic peace organisations in Sri Lanka are part of the conflict-ridden society. Her focus is, above all, on the issue of the dividing lines of identity – ethnicity, class, religion. In spite of the insight that the identity is very important in many conflicts today, analyses of peace movements have often avoided this question, as if the members of these movements were somehow immune towards the problems. But Orjuela illustrates the power relations that take place also within the peace movement along socially divisive lines. At the same time she shows that the peace movement can offer alternative identities, beyond the frontiers of the conflict.

Her conclusions show that the efforts of civil society indirectly contribute to peace and that important attempts are made to challenge the discourse which claims that war and ethnic dividing lines are something "normal".

Orjuela has for a long time served as an observer in the organic network constituted by the Sri Lankan peace movement. During this period she has made more than 100 interviews with different people, from prominent key persons to grass root activists. She

generously shares her rich material and takes the reader to demonstrations, ceremonies and meetings. The many quotations by peace workers give the reader further insight into their daily lives.

The result is a dissertation which can be read, not only for its theoretic knowledge about processes of identity, but also for the author's ability to give the reader a unique insight into the inspiring movement for peace in Sri Lanka. This is a work that should find a natural place outside the academic world, too.

Johanna Mannergren Selimovic
Translated by *Kristina Lundqvist*

Stunning account of Rwandan genocide

Romeo Dallaire: Shake Hands with the Devil: The failure of humanity in Rwanda

Few events have rocked the Post-Cold War world like the Rwandan genocide of 1994. In those 100 days, 800 000 Rwandans were brutally killed, while millions more were injured, displaced, or made refugees. Perhaps even more astonishing than the level of violence, however, was the lack of response by the international community. Rwanda was largely abandoned by the world's major

powers, who seemed more prepared to debate the definition of genocide than they were to respond to one.

A UN peacekeeping mission had been sent to Rwanda in 1993 under the leadership of Canadian Lieutenant-General Romeo Dallaire. This mission had been initially dispatched to oversee the implementation of a peace process to end hostilities between the two major ethnic groups of Rwanda, the Hutu and the Tutsi. In his recent book *Shake Hands with the Devil: The failure of humanity in Rwanda*, Dallaire gave his take on the events that saw his undermanned and ill-equipped UN force overwhelmed by a rapid escalation of violence that ultimately resulted in genocide.

Dallaire's work is a stunningly personal account. A reader can clearly sense the pain and anguish that Dallaire continues to feel. While multiple accounts of the events in Rwanda have revealed Dallaire's heroic attempts to save as many lives as he could with his small force, the scars of his self-doubt are evident throughout the book.

In addition to gaining an insight into the suffering that came as a result of the genocide, a reader also gets a chance to view how the international community woefully responded to the violence once it began. While states

were quick to act to extract their own personnel from the country, they provided no support to the Rwandans or the UN mission. Dallaire recounts his repeated calls for additional aid that were denied by countries that remained fearful of intervention after the embarrassing failure in Somalia. A reader can clearly sense the frustrations that were felt by the UN troops in Rwanda that felt abandoned amidst all the killing and chaos.

In the conclusion to his work, Dallaire levels a scathing critique towards those countries that are not prepared to put their troops in harms way to avoid incidents such as the one in Rwanda. He questions the morality of the view that saw 800 000 lives lost as a result of the inability of some leaders to stomach the loss of their own peacekeepers. Believing that even one failed state is one too many, Dallaire argues vehemently that the international community has a responsibility to protect any and all of our fellow human beings that are at risk.

The Rwandan genocide is a chilling example of the type of brutal violence that has been an all too common occurrence in the Post-Cold War world.

Darryl Whitehead

New books from LPI

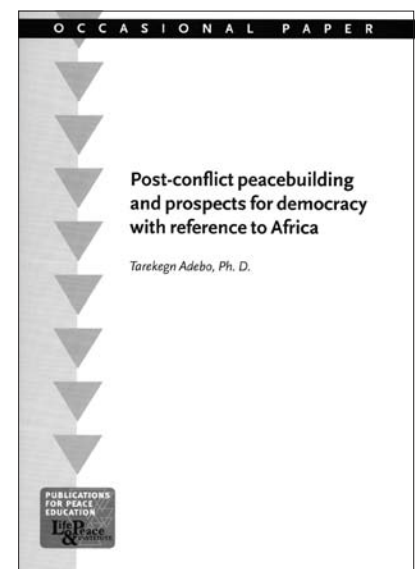
Tarekegn Adebo: Post-conflict peacebuilding and prospects for democracy with reference to Africa.
Life & Peace Institute, 2005

The destructive conflicts that plagued much of Africa are presently moving to the post-conflict stage. The phase has its own particular characteristics that need renewed analyses and understanding. In his paper *Post-conflict peacebuilding and prospects for democracy with reference to Africa*, the author, Dr Tarekegn Adebo, research co-ordinator at LPI, highlights the current stage in the

development of conflicts, particularly in the Horn of Africa, where the Life & Peace Institute has been active for more than a decade. It is a stage concerned with the decisive step of abandoning violence, developing institutions and sustainable political and socio-economic development.

Below please find an excerpt from Tarekegn Adebo's book.

Violent conflicts affect diverse groups and sever multiple relationships in a society. Often widely publicised peace processes are those that take place on national level, involving



negotiations and signing of agreements embodying various stipulations about realising peace. At the post-conflict stage reconciliation work continues to be one of the key concerns of peacebuilding.

The Life & Peace Institute (LPI) with its community focused conflict transformation approach puts great emphasis on people-to-people reconciliation. While agreement among the leaders of the protagonists sets clear tones for peace, reconciling communities ripped by prejudices, hate and violence on various 'fault-lines' do not get serious attention. Particularly, civil wars, as they are fought near villages and homes, among folks that are destined to share everyday life, inevitably rock the foundations of multiple webs of social relations. For lasting peace the whole society must share the spirit of forgiveness and healing. For this there must be consistent work to bring about both intra- and inter-communal reconciliation, which includes the whole society.

Reconciliation involves restoring damaged relationships among parties in harmful conflicts. The practice of reconciliation involves addressing the ways and means of building relations. As experience shows the process entails self-examination, acknowledgement of responsibility, public admission, apology, forgiveness and restoration. It is an act of conflict resolution, which is also related to prevention and transformation processes. Another discussion combines truth, justice, mercy and peace as defining features of reconciliation.

Reconciliation does not negate the political and legal mechanisms of conflict resolution; neither does it try to replace them, rather through its engaging process it attempts to deepen peace - moving it to a level of personal healing. Reconciliation, it is argued, not only tries to find solutions to the issues underlying the conflict but also works to alter the adversaries' relationships from that of resentment and hostility to friendship and harmony.

One can say that conflict resolution or peace accord brings peace message to the capital city, while reconciliation brings it to the village and to home.

Hélène Morvan: Reinventer le quotidien. La cohabitation des populations civiles et des combattants maï-maï au Kivu. Life & Peace Institute, 2005



Hélène Morvan has been working during one year at the Life & Peace Institute office in Bukavu (Democratic Republic of Congo) where she was involved in a programme aiming at strengthening local peace and conflict research capacities. Hélène Morvan also led her own research in the Bunyakiri territory (South Kivu) on social changes and surviving strategies during an armed conflict.

The book is written in French with an abbreviated version translated to English by Lesley-Ann Werleigh. Below please find an excerpt from the English version of Hélène Morvan's research findings.

Over the course of the last century, there has been a considerable shift in relation to the fate endured by civilians in times of war. During the First World War, 95 percent of the victims were combatants. Nowadays 90 percent of the victims of armed conflicts are civilians¹. The results of the survey conducted by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) have estimated that nearly 3,8 million Congolese have died as a result of direct or indirect consequences of war². In these cases, the majority of the victims are civilians,

whether they are victims of ethnic violence, sexual violence, forced movements, as well as being victims of insecurity, who are effectively denied their access to their usual ways of subsistence. Paradoxically, while the issue of civilian protection gains more attention from the media, the civilians seem to be resigned up to recounting their woes and to adding up the number of dead. In general, analyses of conflicts are largely concerned with political analysis at national and international level. The war in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is primarily seen as a fight for political power and access to wealth. The poor populations, while being the first victims of conflicts, are largely excluded from the decision-making process.

By putting the emphasis on the local aspect of the war, this study wishes to focus its analysis on the plight of the local population. The research done in the field shows the complexity of the relationships that exist between civilians and combatants and also partly re-addresses the idea of a binary opposition between the two categories.

¹ Chesterman (S.), "Introduction: global norms, local contexts" in Chesterman (S.) (ed.) *Civilians in war*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, 2001.

² IRC, "Mortality rates in the Democratic Republic of Congo: results from a nationwide survey, conducted April-May 2004", survey's report, December 2004.

LPI publications



Interested to know more about peace and conflict resolution? Please take a look in LPI's recently published Publications Catalogue 2005-2006. It covers more than 60 titles of research reports, conference reports, occasional papers and other publications, with an index that makes it easy to find what you search. Order your own copy for free from LPI!

Words of grief and consolation

A search on the web for 'tsunami + poem', resulting in 333 000 hits, shows that this incomprehensible disaster has made many people channel their reactions, thoughts, questions and sorrow in creative writing. One of them is Dada Pavanandaji from Banda Aceh, Indonesia, who works for AMURT/AMURTEL, an organisation for development and emergency aid. It is one of the few private voluntary organizations of Third World origin, being founded in India in 1965. As he was moving on the minibus to the Internet café, Dada Pavanandaji was struck by the overwhelming scene of desperation of the residents of Banda Aceh. It induced in him these poetic verses.

Banda Aceh

A distant voice resonated your sweet name, Banda Aceh,
The roaring of the waves and strong winds are gone,
Replaced by soft winds
That sweep your dusty streets.

The laughter of children long forgotten returns again
But punctured by dreams of mothers wailing for lost ones.

I see many houses closed in the streets never to open again,
Whose dwellers have been carried away by the angry ocean
Never to return.

Sweet smiling faces greet me as I walk
But when I penetrate the eyelids of those who smile,
I see hidden tears in their eyes.

Let us all put our effort to understand You,
O Mother Earth,
So You may never punish us in your anger.

People of distant lands are all gathered
To give a warming embrace to those in distress
May courage and strength accompany everyone
So everyone may become a beacon of light in time of need.

So that the Earth may become a place
Where all will sing and dance in unison
And where true love will emerge.

Dada Pavanananda, Banda Aceh
Febr 15, 2005



Photo: Orla Clinton/ACT

LPI periodicals

New Routes is the quarterly in-house journal of LPI, offering analysis and commentary on issues of peace, justice and development. The journal provides information on research and programme issues as well as current publications and activities.

Horn of Africa Bulletin is a bimonthly media review covering the African countries of the Horn. The Bulletin provides a survey of current developments, with particular emphasis on issues of peace, development and conflict transformation.