



Learning to resolve conflict

by *Duberney Rojas Seguro*



Photo: Jim Loring Tearfund

Club Deportivo uses football to train young people to resolve conflict.

Medellín, in Colombia, is a city in desperate need of conflict resolution. It has suffered from two decades of armed conflict between criminal gangs, socialist guerrillas and paramilitary groups. Murders are common. This conflict has directly impacted on the lives of a generation of children and young people who have been born and have grown up in this context of violence. Many of the armed groups are formed of young people of both sexes, between 14 and 25 years old.

Club Deportivo works with young people caught up in the violence. We have observed the skills and abilities that local communities develop in order to survive and resolve conflicts within this context of long-term violence. We set ourselves the task of identifying these strengths and building upon them. We did this through a combination of

games, research, and training in conflict resolution.

Using football to train peace negotiators

The game of football is very popular with young people. It offers an atmosphere of tension similar to that of an armed conflict. We organised a

football tournament called the 'Peace Negotiators' Cup' which had the following special characteristics:

Mixed teams The teams had to include both male and female players. At least five female players had to be present for each game to start. Young women were keen to participate because they saw the experience as an opportunity to improve their sporting skills. At first, the boys were reluctant to play with girls, but as the tournament progressed, they noticed that the girls were good competitors and they began to accept them as equals. We also found that the girls respected the rules more and put pressure on the boys to follow them!

No referee The players themselves (of both sexes) had to resolve any situations of conflict in the game.

No set rules The players had to suggest and agree on the rules for each game.

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Photo Club Deportivo

The children and young people showed the ability to manage conflicts.

Observer We assigned an observer for each game to record what happened on the pitch. This person did not interfere with negotiations to resolve conflicts. However, if violence broke out the observer had the power to immediately send off any players who had resorted to violence.

These adaptations meant that during the game each player was repeatedly faced by situations of conflict where

they had to draw on their abilities to negotiate and to find reconciliation. The tournament was held monthly, and the desire to win the competition motivated people to participate.

Resolving conflict

The children and young people in the tournament had grown up surrounded by violence. However, during games they showed the ability to manage conflicts using alternative, peaceful methods, although they did occasionally resort to violence. Some of the methods they used were:

Protest Even in the heat of the game, players were able to cause the opposing team to acknowledge their fouls by stopping the game in peaceful protest. They did this by:

- holding on to the ball so that the game had to stop
- remaining completely quiet and still (as though paralysed).

Mediation The players practised mediation skills by:

- bringing together the people who were playing unfairly and making them choose to play fair or leave the game



Photo Jim Loring Tearfund

- working together with players in other teams to ensure fair play, or to strengthen the participation of girls
- intervening to prevent physical aggression when some of the players became violent.

Reconciliation When confusing situations arose, the teams entered into discussion, without resorting to violence, until they reached an agreement. Reconciliation was possible because:

- they agreed at the start on rules for the games, and ensured they were kept through discussion and other non-violent means
- they would ask the opinion of third parties to help resolve complex conflicts such as contested goals.

Sometimes, both teams would be unaware of a foul. It might seem that it affected just one player. But we were able to show them how this could grow to become an unmanageable conflict. It should not be ignored, it should be resolved immediately.

It has been interesting to observe the children and young people putting their abilities and skills into practice during the conflicts that arose in each

game. It gave us insight into people's potential for managing conflict. Local communities can often be seen as simply the weak victims of violence. But people who live through prolonged armed conflict, like the people of Medellín, learn how to survive, to make the best of things and even how to make a difference to the conflict. There has been much bloodshed, but conflict can also provide an opportunity to learn. In Medellín we have learned that the local community is not helpless, it has the potential to bring change for the good.

In this project we also noted the ability of the young women to have their rights respected in the company of men. When the boys would not pass them the ball, the girls joined together and refused to take part in the game. They also often took the initiative in resolving conflicts. In some cases, girls were team captains.

The project has had an impact on the wider society as the participants applied what they have learned on the pitch in their communities.

We have noticed that there is more respect for women. This is evident when women are now using public facilities such as football grounds.

There is also less resorting to violence as a way of resolving conflicts.

This project provided an environment in which to develop skills in conflict resolution. A project like this could be run anywhere in the world where there is prolonged urban armed conflict and where team sports are practised (it does not need to be football). The sport needs to involve a struggle for something difficult to achieve, where each team competes to be champion. The project can then combine the sport with research and conflict resolution training.

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Glossary of words used in this issue

conflict

a serious disagreement or argument, or even an armed struggle. Conflict is caused when two or more people or groups have, or think they have, different views or goals

guerrilla

person in an independent armed force

mediator

a person or organisation who facilitates discussion and reconciliation between people or groups in conflict

negotiate

to try to come to agreement about something through discussion

psychological

relating to the mind or emotions

reconciliation

the restoration of relationships

restoration

rebuilding something that has been damaged

trauma

a physical or emotional wound that creates lasting damage

CASE STUDY Equal rights



During one of the games, one of the girls overheard her male companions planning to avoid passing the ball to the girls. When she heard this, she gathered together the other female players and they all agreed, in protest, not to play. When the girls told the boys about their decision, the boys found themselves having to plead with the girls to join in the game – otherwise they would lose, since the rules of the tournament said that there should be at least five female players on the pitch. The girls used this opportunity to negotiate that the boys had to pass them the ball and that one of the girls could be captain. The boys agreed to these conditions and the game went ahead. From then on, the girls saw how the rules of the game provided an effective tool for creating more equality between the sexes, and the boys understood that they had to respect women's rights.

Young women were keen to participate.



Editorial

When we look at our world, we can see much need for forgiveness and reconciliation. Conflict is not just about war and violence. All of us regularly face some level of conflict in our relationships at work or home.

Conflict can sometimes be a positive thing, such as when we fight against injustice and stand up for our rights and the rights of others. However, more often conflict is destructive. So much money and time is spent addressing the results of conflict, such as rebuilding houses and infrastructure and providing medical treatment for physical injuries. Yet the psychological wounds and the underlying causes of conflict are rarely dealt with.

In Matthew 6:14, it is clear that God asks us to forgive others, as he has forgiven us. I have found this issue very challenging, as I think of situations in my life where I need to take the initiative to forgive someone, or to ask for forgiveness.

Forgiveness is not a natural reaction when someone has hurt us. It is a choice we need to make if we are to be free of bitterness, and if we want to move forward and break out of the cycle of violence and blame.

Forgiveness is essential for reconciliation, but reconciliation goes beyond words, into action, to restore the broken relationship. It is a process that requires the willing participation and commitment of both sides.

In this issue we look at different aspects of forgiveness, and practical ideas for how we can support each other and work through the process of reconciliation.

The next issue will be about sexual health.

Maggie Sandilands,
Sub Editor

Seeing hope and bringing people together

by Bal Kumari Rai Gurung

Forgiveness is not as easy to practise as it is to preach, but it is an essential step towards reconciliation and living in harmony. Forgiveness includes letting go of the hurts and resentments we keep within ourselves. Forgiveness is difficult. It requires energy and time, yet it is possible to achieve if people really put their heart and soul into it.

United Mission to Nepal (UMN) is an international Christian development organisation working in Nepal. We work in partnership with Nepali organisations in various areas of development, including peace and conflict transformation. One of UMN's activities in this area is to help groups, families and individuals during times of conflict and to bring about forgiveness and reconciliation.

In one remote district where UMN works, a disagreement arose in the only church that exists in the whole district. The pastor had made the decision to change the denomination of this small church without consulting the church elders. Some elders resented this. They began to argue with each other, and some stopped attending church. UMN began to work with various church members to bring about reconciliation. Now, after a year (it does take time!), members are meeting together again. They have also registered the church as a community-based organisation in order to work together in helping the community. The things that helped us in facilitating the process of reconciliation were: trust, friendship, listening, understanding, communication and persistence.

Trust

Although we were outsiders, both sides trusted us, perhaps because we were not personally involved in the disagreement. It is important that mediators are independent, non-judgmental and trusted by everyone involved. This trust encouraged people to be open towards us when sharing their thoughts. They told us how they had been hurt and how they felt about others. They believed that we wanted to help them to sort out the problems. Trust is the foundation upon which

healthy relationships can grow. Trust depends on:

- knowing each other well
- time and patience: it takes time to develop trust
- having a common faith. Whenever we visited, we went to the church services, shared the stories of our lives and spent time together with the local believers.

A friend who listens

One of the most important things we did was simply to be there when needed and to listen without being judgmental or biased. Listening is the best place to start when acting as a mediator.

As a minority community, the members of the church were used to working very closely together and sharing their experiences with each other. They often met to plan work together, or gather for informal chats and Bible studies, which were opportunities for sharing sorrows, joys and prayers, along with drinking tea. All this stopped once the tension started, so they were relieved to share their stories with us when we visited them. We learned from both sides that they had missed having a close friend who listens sympathetically.

Helping people to understand the conflict

Another essential key to the reconciliation process was helping each individual to see the facts and reality of the problem. We used different tools and techniques to help them to understand the conflict and move towards accepting each other.

The Bible Because it was a faith group, the most powerful tools were Bible study and prayers. Our Bible studies focused on God's love, forgiveness and reconciliation. We conducted the prayers and studies separately with the different groups and prayed constantly for God to show us the way to confession, repentance and reunion, which is what God wants for his people. We also used a Tearfund ROOTS book, *Peace-building within our communities*, as a reference for our Bible studies.

Analysis We used training and discussion to help each person to understand what conflict means, the types and stages of conflict and people's responses towards it. Analysing the conflict was interesting and helpful. We looked at:

- the core problem
- how it started
- what the causes and effects were
- how to work out a solution.

We helped them to analyse the factors that can bring people together and also the ones that cause tension and divide people. During a meeting with the key people involved in the conflict we discussed and together identified the issues that added fuel to the conflict. Then we encouraged them to think creatively of as many ways as possible that they could minimise the effects. This built up confidence that it was possible to bring about reconciliation. Another tool is self-analysis. This helped people to understand their own faults and the part they played in the conflict, which led to repentance and the path towards forgiveness.

Communication

After understanding the problem and analysing the conflict, we discussed with each side what they thought the best solution was. When this decision had been made, it was communicated clearly to the other group. During our

mediation role, we emphasised the sharing of positive perspectives and opinions with each side. This created a sense of good will. Then we facilitated a meeting between both sides so they could make a new start with a renewed hope.

Continuous nurture and care

When dealing with people's hurts and feelings, continuous care and support is vital. We showed our care and support through our prayers, by listening attentively, by showing concern and interest in settling the problem, visiting often and chatting with people.

The Bible states that forgiveness and reconciliation are possible. To bring peace in a community, people have to keep in good relationship with God, with others, with creation and also with themselves.

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In any community of people, including churches, there is potential for conflict.

Forgiveness and reconciliation

by Sarah Mirembe

Someone who has been offended or deeply hurt will usually feel they have a right to be angry, hurt and bitter. They may even plan to take revenge. In contrast, God asks us to trust him with our pain, trust him for justice, and forgive those who hurt us (Romans 12:17-20).

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is a very challenging issue because it seems to mean that the offender gets away free. They may have acted deliberately and may not be sorry. They may do it again and go unpunished. There seems to be no motivation for the injured person to begin this journey. However, even though forgiveness is not easy, it is necessary for the good of the injured person. People who are hurt and do not forgive often continue to suffer stress and emotional wounds because they are holding on to the anger and bitterness.

Forgiveness is often misunderstood. It is a choice to let go of our hurt and resentment. It does not mean:

- that we excuse or approve of the offence
- that the offence is forgotten or did not matter
- that the offence has no consequences

- that the injured person, or their hurt does not matter.

Reconciliation

Reconciliation is a process that goes beyond forgiveness. It is achieved when people who have been in conflict reach a positive relationship with each other. Reconciliation usually requires an experienced mediator or counsellor who is trusted and can speak to everyone involved in the conflict. This counsellor must be wise, emotionally mature, resilient, objective, and never take sides. He or she should be well respected in the community, and remain committed however long the process takes.

A mediator cannot solve the conflict on their own. All those involved must decide that reconciliation is the best option for each of them, that it is better than continuing the conflict. Everyone needs to be committed to the process, to making it as easy as possible to sit

CASE STUDY

In Uganda, many children, young people and adults have been abducted and forced to join the Lord's Resistance Army. Even if they manage to escape and return to their community, they face the long-term challenge of forgiveness and reconciliation. This is how one young woman described her journey towards forgiving the man who had abducted her:

'I hated you, because of the pain you caused me. But I was reminded of you everywhere I went. So I was stuck, because I hated you, and yet I had to live with memories of you. The counsellor helped me to realise that I hated being stuck with you. That was the first motivation for me to forgive you. Hating you made me so sick; I desperately wanted to be well, so I agreed with the counsellor to help me throw the hatred out.'

at the same table and live in the same community. Potential future conflicts should be discussed and worked through. Commitment to reconciliation must be demonstrated by an appropriate action. For example, in Uganda, this meant agreeing that children of former rebels can be accepted in schools.

Where an offence has been committed, the offender should be sorry, and ready to admit that. If they do not want to communicate, or are defensive, it means they are not ready for reconciliation. Sometimes people seek financial compensation. However, this is rarely a long-term answer. It might meet some physical needs of the injured person, but it does not resolve the situation. Ideas of revenge can always re-surface.

Reconciliation is not just an event. It must become a value and a lifestyle. It should be passed on from one generation to the next, through Bible study, discussion, discipline, and by living as an example. Forgiveness and reconciliation are part of a journey that few people make but whose destination is freedom, health, and peace.

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Photo: Jim Loring / Tearfund

Forgiveness and reconciliation are needed to ensure future peace.

Protecting crops from birds

We are trying to protect our rice crops from bird pests. Rice is a major crop here. We are finding it very difficult to control and avoid the threat from birds. Farmers are staying in the fields all day to chase away the birds. This tires them and prevents other domestic activities.

Can you provide us with technical advice so that our farmers can grow their rice, sleep peacefully and also develop more effective techniques for controlling these predators without killing them? If other readers have overcome this problem we would be delighted to hear from them.

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Help with epilepsy

I write to thank readers of *Footsteps* for responding to our request about understanding and managing epilepsy, published in *Footsteps 44*. We are particularly grateful to Mr Ebire of Oweri in Nigeria. He has helped us to focus on developing the capacity of patients to recognise the signs of oncoming seizures and so avoid seizure-related accidents.

However, this new approach, which mainly involves training, is not so popular with the patients who still prefer material support through drugs. So we would like advice on how to increase demand for this training, especially among young people.

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Plant dyes

I read with interest your page on home-made dyes (*Footsteps 21*) and thought you might like to know about eucalyptus plants. All the different

> Linking literacy and environmental sustainability

The community of São Geraldo is in the semi-arid region of Rio Grande do Norte in Brazil. Tearfund partner Diaconia decided to establish a plant nursery here. They planted fruit trees to generate income and to replace the many trees in this area that have been cut down for firewood. Ozenilda Morais Farias, a literacy teacher in a local school, suggested that her pupils (aged five to eight years) could get involved. She hoped they could learn about the importance of environmental sustainability in a practical way.

Ozenilda now uses the curiosity of the children as a starting point for learning. They compare what is written in the books about ecology that they are learning to read, with what they can see happening in the plant nursery. She says: 'We believe in the potential of these children as agents of multiplication. The understanding that they are gaining can be applied as much in the present as in the future, guaranteeing an improvement in the quality of life of the community. This is educational work that benefits all the local families by selling saplings, generating income and enabling the young people to stay in the countryside.'

For more information, please contact: Verlândia de Medeiros (forestry engineer and technical advisor to Diaconia).

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kinds of these plants contain protein fibres, to which you do not need to add chemicals to fix the dye. Eucalypts are increasingly used as timber crops and to help restore degraded land areas, so are becoming more widely available.

Lichens, on the other hand, generally grow very slowly and release their dye potential only after careful and experienced handling. I suggest that their use as a dye source is not sustainable and ought therefore not to be generally recommended.

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Breeding termites

I would like to respond to the request for information about breeding termites in *Footsteps 66*. I would recommend that you do not use termites because they are highly destructive.

There are no nutrients in termites which you can't get from the other types of poultry feeds available.

When you use termites to feed poultry, some of them will escape into the ground. They will destroy anything in the area that is made out of wood. It is difficult and expensive to get rid of them.

It would be better to look for alternative poultry feeds, as using termites is not very cost effective.

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Turkey eggs

My turkeys usually lay in March, the peak of heat here, about 42 degrees and above. All the eggs usually spoil. I would like some advice please.

Samuel Angyogdem
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Walls of separation

by Malcolm P Chisholm

Physical distances between people and cultures can now be crossed by aeroplanes, mobile phones and 24-hour television news coverage. But many communities around the world are still divided. Conflict may be open or unseen. Physical or emotional walls now separate people who used to live together in peace. People often talk about peace and reconciliation, but few actually walk the costly road of breaking down these walls of separation.

Walls are built for many different reasons, such as to support buildings, to define a legal boundary, to protect people or property, and to keep animals from wandering and make looking after them easier.

In many parts of the world, walls are also built within and between communities. Some of these are **physical walls**, such as the long 'peace walls' within certain parts of Belfast, in Northern Ireland. There has been violent conflict in this area for many years. These walls are a representation of the genuine fear and mistrust held between opposing communities who live side by side. Some of these walls are several miles long. Over the years, as the conflict continued, they have been built higher and stronger. Even after official government peace agreements, the walls have continued to grow.

These 'peace walls' are a reminder that while governments may say that peace has arrived, life at ground level is not one of peaceful harmony. Around the world, many local communities are left behind to struggle in former ethnic conflict zones as the world moves on to the next peace initiative.

Walls across communities cause long diversions to previously simple journeys. Sadly, with time, people get used to them and it becomes normal. Other people, who were not directly involved or around at the time of the original need for the walls, accept such walls and the necessary diversions. Yet in their hearts they know that something is not right.

Unseen walls can also be built in people's hearts, such as between a man

and wife, between former friends, or between 'them' and 'us'. They can be symbolic of a relationship that now rests on mistrust, rather than being built on trust. Each misinterpreted action or inaction adds another brick in the wall. These divisions can also



The walls between people in conflict are not just physical.

be found within the Christian church, which should be working towards unity and peace in a divided and hurting world. We pray and urge local politicians to get together to sort out a political situation. Yet many Christians are not prepared to recognise or deal with the walls that cause so much division within the church. Often the walls we put up affect not only our lives but the lives of others as well.

Just as people have to take avoidance routes around physical walls, so many people also avoid meeting the people they are in conflict with. Much energy, time and money is used up in maintaining these walls, but the underlying reasons for the existence of such walls is not addressed.

Unfortunately, walls do not come down by themselves. People must want them to come down. Underlying fears and attitudes must be faced and dealt with, and the process takes time, courage and mutual agreement.

The *group exercise* opposite can be used to demonstrate how walls are built between people.

Recognising a wall is one thing. Taking the costly steps to start demolishing that wall is not easy, but the rewards outweigh the cost. Laying down our pride, forgiving people and dealing with conflict is not an easy task. Even if we feel we are not in the wrong, perhaps we need to be the one to make the first step towards reconciliation.

Several trips across the rubble of the wall will have to be taken. Reconciliation is an integral part of God's work, and is not optional for Christians. Jesus knocked down the wall separating us from God. With his grace, and with the help of the Holy Spirit, we can also creatively help others to be reconciled.

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Building walls

This group activity can be used within the context of a peace-building workshop or as part of on-going reconciliation work within a community in conflict. The exercise can effectively demonstrate how walls get built up between groups of people, reveal issues of conflict that need to be dealt with, and introduce ideas of reconciliation. An experienced facilitator is needed as it is important to discuss and work through the issues that may be raised during the exercise. For more information about facilitation see *Footsteps 60*.

1 Getting started

For this activity you will need:

Venue Preferably indoors, or an outdoor space with clearly marked sides.

Groups Divide the participants into two groups. Choose the groups randomly (for example by numbering participants alternately 1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2 etc), so that each group contains a mix of people from both sides of the actual conflict. The two groups move to different ends of the room.

Equipment Old cardboard boxes (empty tin cans, logs, or bricks could also be used), small pieces of paper to stick on the boxes, pens.

Time Allow about 1½ – 2 hours, including at least ½ hour for feedback.

2 Wall-building for beginners

One person starts by writing or drawing on a small piece of paper something that he or she does not like about the 'other group' or 'other person' in their conflict situation. This could be an attitude or an action, something they have experienced personally. It should then be fixed onto the side of a box. This box is then placed in between the two groups, as the first brick in the wall. The piece of paper should be on the writer's side of the wall, so that the other group doesn't see it. Someone from

the other group then does the same from their side and adds it to the wall. Neither group has the opportunity to know what is written on the pieces of paper on the other side.

Soon the wall of boxes begins to grow, and so does the participants' enthusiasm! Continue building until it is as high as they can safely build it. It is important that every participant adds at least one or two boxes of their own to the wall. Once the wall is built, ask the participants to shout out some



Photo Malcolm Chisholm

of their collective feelings about the 'other side'. After a while ask them what they want to do with the wall. Hopefully, they want it knocked down. If this is so, let them do so carefully. Usually this is very quick!

3 Debriefing

Once the wall is knocked down and all the rubble cleared away, it is important to debrief the participants.

Ask the participants to feed back about what their team wrote on their bits of paper (to make this anonymous, people do not have to say what was on their specific one). The facilitator should summarise these on a large piece of paper.

Then, ask the participants to feed back about how they felt about themselves when placing the boxes, and then how they felt about the other group, as the wall got higher and they were cut off from them.



Photo Malcolm Chisholm

Throughout this activity, the facilitator needs to be very careful to notice any signs of painful emotions, or body language that reveals exposed hurts, and to manage any sensitive situations that may arise. It is important to give people the chance to express what they feel and think and not just to suppress it. However, it is also important that tensions do

not go too far and become unmanageable and destructive.

One idea is to have a suggestion box, where people can write down issues they would like to be raised but perhaps find too emotionally hurtful to speak about. These issues can then be looked at constructively later in the workshop.

At the end of the feedback, the facilitator can draw out common areas for future discussions or personal reflection and action by the participants. They should discuss how to take the learning from this exercise forward into their wider situation and community.

Peace-building and conflict transformation

by Gary Swart



Photo Mike Webb Tearfund

PaCT needs to address the underlying causes of conflict, not just the effects, if it is to prevent future violence.

True peace is not simply about stopping violence. The peace the Bible speaks of is *shalom*. *Shalom* is the restoration and reconciling of our relationships with God, those around us, and with all of creation. It is about bringing people back into a state of harmony, well-being, and re-connection with the creation into which God has placed us. Working towards peace and reconciliation is a ministry to which all Christians are called. It is not only for the professionals. Jesus calls us all to be peacemakers, and to love one another, including our enemies (Matthew 5).

The Balkans region, in Europe, has seen many generations of ethnic conflict. Violence during the 1990s was stopped by the intervention of the international community. But *shalom* is still far off. There remains much division, suspicion

and hatred in the region. Tearfund and its partners recognised that for the cycle of violence finally to come to an end, the root causes of the conflict had to be addressed. Tearfund began working with its partners in the region to include Peace-building and Conflict Transformation (PaCT) throughout their work. This means that organisations become sensitive to the conflict environments in which they work. They make

sure that they have a constructive long-term impact that prevents potential future conflict.

Characteristics of PaCT work

Some of the lessons learned during this time about PaCT were:

It is a lifestyle Being a peacemaker is not just a job description. It is not something Jesus calls us just to *do*, but what he calls us to *be* (Matthew 5:9). We have to model reconciliation in our own lives and organisations before we try to help others toward reconciliation. For an organisation, this means that being reconcilers and peacemakers has to be at the core of its mission and values. One of Tearfund's partners worked in an ethnically mixed area that had previously suffered conflict, so they decided to employ an ethnically mixed team. They realised that to be agents of effective transformation, they had to model this transformation themselves.

It transforms Reconciliation work addresses the core values and attitudes that motivate us as human beings. PaCT deals with an internal change that has outward results. It involves the healing and restoration of relationships, and so it takes time. If an organisation wants to travel down the road of being reconcilers and peacemakers, then it has to be committed to, and prepared for, a long and often difficult journey.

It is complicated It is important to spend time understanding the specific local context if effective strategies are going to be developed to promote *shalom*. It is rarely simple. There are often a variety

> A 'Good Practice Framework' for PaCT

- Model peace-building and reconciliation. It is not just a project – it is a lifestyle.
- Develop and maintain effective partnerships for peace. One organisation cannot bring peace to an area on its own. A combined effort of a number of organisations and stakeholders is usually needed. Everyone involved needs to be committed to peace.
- Make a long-term commitment of time and resources. Recognise that PaCT takes time and is hard to monitor. Think about this in the design and implementation phases.
- Be clear about your understanding of PaCT and your motivation for this work. Communicate this clearly and include it in the vision and values of the organisation.
- Don't forget the importance of people. Reconciliation is about restoring relationships between people. Treat all people with equal respect and dignity. Don't allow any form of discrimination.
- Consider conflict sensitivity at all levels within the organisation.

CASE STUDIES

- When training events were held for the various organisations and community groups, different ethnic groups were invited together for the training. In one case Tearfund organised advocacy training for Albanians, Croats and Serbs in Belgrade. It was the first time since the war that the Albanians had interacted with Serbs, and for them it was a deeply healing experience.
- One Tearfund partner ran a house re-building project for refugees and internally displaced people. The project included counselling support, provided by Christian counsellors. This support was available not only to beneficiaries but also to staff working with the refugees, as staff were often traumatised from listening to the stories of the beneficiaries.

of complicated reasons and conditions that result in conflict. Each conflict is unique.

It is important to understand the root causes of conflict in the area. This understanding can be used to plan effective advocacy to address these underlying issues. This can help prevent future conflicts. It is important to listen to all parties involved. Listening is a key part of understanding the context, but can also be used as an effective way of starting reconciliation. Learning to understand a conflict from the other person's perspective is a powerful way of breaking down barriers between us.

It is spiritual PaCT has a deeply spiritual dimension to it. Prayer is vital for its success (Ephesians 6:10-19). Christian organisations working for reconciliation should make sure they are committed to, and supported in, prayer.

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Bible study

'Forgive as the Lord forgave you'

Forgiving others is not optional for Christians; it is a command. In Matthew 6:12, Jesus taught us to pray, 'Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us'. He made it clear that God's offer of forgiveness is inseparable from our willingness to forgive others. So what is the nature of this link?

Read Matthew 18:21-35

First of all, forgiving others when they wrong us is part of our grateful response to God's forgiveness of our own sins through Jesus' death on the cross. His forgiveness is based exclusively on his unconditional love and grace. We do not deserve it. The Greek word for sin in Matthew 6:12 means literally 'debt'. Because we have broken God's law we have debts towards him that we can never pay back. If we ask God to cancel our enormous debts while we refuse to cancel the tiny debts that people owe us, then we act at best inconsistently and at worst hypocritically.

Read Colossians 3:12-15

Secondly, forgiving people is a powerful demonstration of loving them. As God is our loving Father he wants to forgive us our sins, to restore our relationship with him. Just as God requires us to love our neighbour, so are we to forgive them.

- *Who is your neighbour?*
- *How does this passage challenge us in our relationships with people who have hurt us?*

Finally, forgiving others what they have done to us is a reliable test for our faith. Does our faith make a real difference in our life? Forgiving others is not easy. It is not natural – our natural response is to want to take revenge. But Jesus forgave his enemies who crucified him – before he died he prayed; 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing' (Luke 23:34). You may protest that Jesus was the Son of God, and we are not, that it is beyond our sinful human nature to love our enemies as Jesus commanded us to do. However, if Christianity is about having a personal relationship with God, and if God is real and powerful, then surely he will empower those who trust in him to experience the power of his love and forgiveness in their own lives.

Without forgiveness there is no genuine peace. As all of us do wrong and hurt each other, we need to ask forgiveness as much as to forgive. Saying sorry and asking forgiveness from people we have wronged is sometimes even harder than forgiving those who wronged us. But if with God's help we decide to make forgiveness our way of life, then this way will lead us to peace – peace with ourselves, with others and with God. This peace is a great and wonderful blessing that God wants everyone to enjoy.

- *How unique is Jesus in terms of addressing the issue of forgiveness?*
- *Are there any people that you need to forgive or to ask forgiveness from?*
- *What are the social implications of the Christian faith, in terms of bringing reconciliation between different people?*

The writer, Dr Chawkat Moucary, is a tutor at All Nations Christian College. He is the author of The Search for Forgiveness: Pardon and Punishment in Islam and Christianity (IVP, 2004).

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Healing through listening

by Angus Murray

Our beliefs about ourselves, other people and our world help us to make sense of our experiences and the world around us. We build our beliefs through our own experiences or inherit them from our family or culture. Unless challenged, we are often not even aware of them. They simply appear to us as just 'normal', or the way things are.

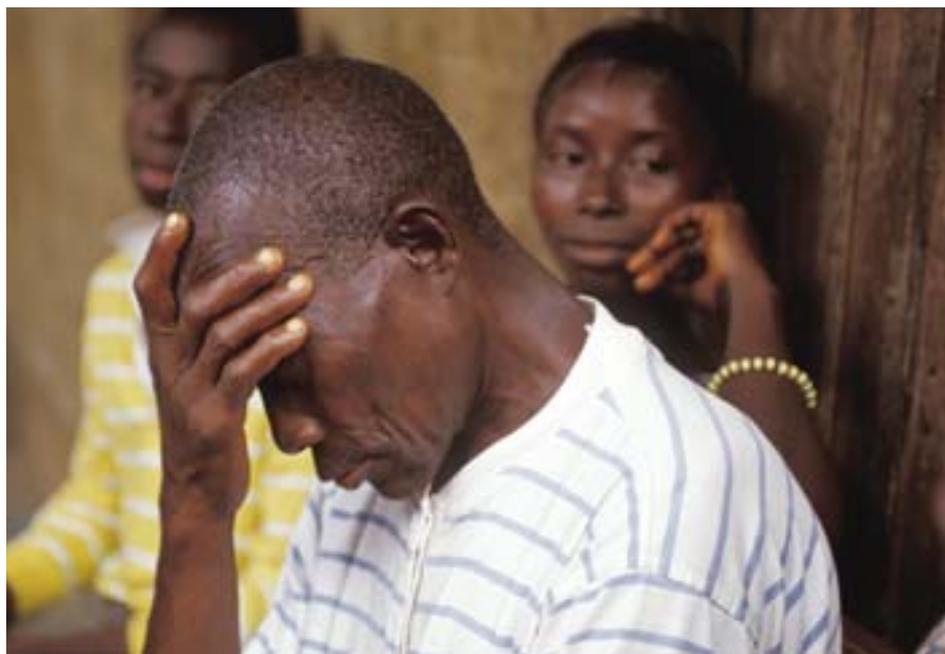


Photo: Jim Loring, Tearfund

After traumatic events, people may appreciate having someone listen to their experiences.

Violence changes things. We can feel overwhelmed when we experience something shockingly different from the way we normally see ourselves or the world around us. Perhaps our life was in danger or we were the victim of another's violence, or we found ourselves doing something that went against our normal beliefs, values and behaviour. This can lead us to question ourselves – why did that happen, or why did we act in that way? We may question our faith and our understanding of God. Distressing events that shatter the way we see ourselves and our world are said to be *traumatic*.

When we experience something traumatic, we can feel completely out of control and struggle to make sense of the chaos. Feelings of fear, helplessness, or horror are normal reactions to an

abnormal situation, and not a sign of weakness. We need to acknowledge these feelings. Talking about our experiences can help us to make sense of them. Most people who experience a traumatic event need support and understanding from those around them to help them recover.

A good way to support someone's healing process is to be an **active listener**. Many people rarely experience this sort of listening and it can be a great source of healing. You do not need to be a professional counsellor to listen effectively. The following are some key skills for active listening.

Finding a safe place

First, it is important to help the person relax and feel safe with you. You cannot assume that a person who has experienced a distressing event will

feel safe and you may have to earn their trust. People need to know that they can speak about sensitive issues in confidence.

- Find somewhere comfortable where you can talk without interruptions such as phone calls or visitors.
- Agree a level of confidentiality at the start, so that what is said is not passed on to anyone else, unless it is a situation where either the person themselves or others would be at risk. This is particularly important when working with children. Make it clear from the start that you cannot promise confidentiality if they tell you about child abuse. For more information about child protection, go to www.keepingchildrensafe.org.uk
- Most people will find it easier to talk openly with someone of the same sex.

Listening

People will share their experience only if and when they feel ready to do so. This can take time, and it is important that people are never forced into talking about distressing issues. As active listeners, we need to be patient and respect the other person.

- Do not ask too many questions. Use questions to check that you have understood correctly, rather than to push for more information.
- When listening, let the other person guide the content and pace of what they want to share.
- When some people try to share their experience, they may find it difficult to describe what has happened. As an active listener, it is enough to sit with them and share the silence.
- Your own experience may or may not be helpful to share. Don't rush in with your story or your opinions. This is not about you.

Understanding

As an active listener, do not take on the role of expert, advisor, teacher, rescuer or fixer. Focus instead on

> Know your limits

Sometimes the experiences people share may be very shocking or distressing to hear. It is wisdom, not weakness, to recognise and admit our limits. This includes time limits.

Make sure you are emotionally strong and stable enough to be able to listen to another's hurt. You also need to have your own support network of family and friends.

It is important to know when further help is needed, and work with the person to find it. Except in cases of child abuse, you should always ask their permission to share what they have told you.

trying to understand the other person's experience and feelings. Because we all have our own ways of thinking and feeling, each person will experience a traumatic event differently. We cannot really understand what it was like for the other person unless we can first put

aside our own feelings and experience. We need to be fully attentive and willing to listen to their unique experience.

Pay attention to the person's emotional response as well as the story of their experience. Think about the whole person:

- What feelings do they express?
- Body language and facial expression – do they look relaxed, tense, afraid, happy, disgusted?
- Voice – do they speak quietly and nervously, or confidently? Quickly or slowly? Are there silences?

You may wish to summarise in a few words some of what you hear (the feelings as well as the story), just to check that you have understood it.

Acceptance

The final important attitude for healing is acceptance. By offering unconditional acceptance to another person, we show that we are willing to try to understand their experience. This means that we

are willing to accept all their emotional responses, even when they are uncomfortable for us, such as confusion, resentment, fear, anger, or despair. Even if we cannot understand or agree with their attitudes or behaviour, we may be able to accept them as another human being who is made in the image of God. Acceptance relies on us offering grace to another person instead of judging them, just as God offers grace to us. This may be especially difficult if they have been involved in carrying out acts of violence themselves.

This special kind of listening can be difficult to do, but is a powerful source of healing for those who have experienced a traumatic event.

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Om Kheun forgives

Chrang Bak is a village built on the rubbish-strewn edge of the Bassac river near Phnom Penh, in Cambodia. Om Kheun is a local shopkeeper. Perhaps she is a better neighbour than businesswoman, because when poor neighbours come to buy food on credit, she cannot refuse. People from all over the neighbourhood come to her for advice as well as goods. She understands their problems because she is poor too.

Om Kheun later became a Christian. She read in the Bible that Jesus calls us to forgive those who have wronged us. With this new insight, she examined her heart and saw that there was something wrong there, something that was spoiling her relationships in the village. Over the years she had extended a lot of credit to other families. The amounts had grown so large that few of the poorest families would ever be able to repay her. And this created a double problem. Deep down she realised she felt angry and frustrated with those who owed her so much. She could be so much further ahead in life if they paid up! On the other hand, she realised that those poor families were also deeply ashamed of their debt and they now avoided her as much as possible. Om Kheun didn't want to feel bitter, or to be avoided. And so, inspired by what she read in the Bible, she decided to solve the problem. Taking her record book in hand, she went from family to family and before their eyes drew a line through their debt, declaring it 'forgiven'. At the stroke of a pen they were set free – and so now was she.

Although her life is often a struggle, Om Kheun has a sense of freedom. She has found something better than bitterness and hatred. She found a faith that transformed her despair into hope through the power of love and forgiveness.

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Photo Richard Hanson Tearfund

Marriage relationships

Conflict is not just about open warfare. Conflict exists in human relationships at all levels. Family Impact is a Christian organisation that works to transform communities through family and relationship counselling.

John and Precious appeared to be a happily married Christian couple who came to a Family Impact 'Enjoy Your Marriage' weekend. In fact, Precious felt deeply inferior both as a woman and as a wife. The first evening she was amazed at the passage in Genesis 1

which says that men and women are both created in the image of God, with equal value. However, she found it hard to communicate with her husband, so she did not say anything to John.

Next day, the facilitators asked John and Precious to do a role play of a couple who were not communicating well because they did not listen to each other. They acted brilliantly and everyone laughed as they each spoke their own ideas and did not connect at all with their partner.

After the weekend, a facilitator met Precious in town. She was smiling as

she said, 'What you asked us to act out was what we were like in real life. This helped us a lot. Now we have learnt to communicate much better. I was able to explain to John how I felt second-rate as a wife. He assured me that he respected and loved me as an equal partner. I am a new person!'

The author, David Cunningham, is Africa Director of Family Impact.

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Choosing to forgive

Lesley Bilinda is a community health worker who spent several years working for Tearfund in Rwanda. She was visiting Kenya when the 1994 genocide began, but her Rwandan husband Charles, a secondary school English teacher, was among those killed during the violence.

Ten years later, Lesley went back to Rwanda to try to find out the truth of what happened to her husband. She has felt the 'survivor's guilt', wishing that she could have been with her friends and family in the time of trouble. She has also faced a constant internal struggle between anger at what has happened, and God's challenge to forgive. 'I thought long and hard about forgiving those who had been responsible for murdering him. Was it possible to forgive someone without knowing who they were? But I felt I had to try to forgive, for my sake if nothing else. Deep inside I was very angry and bitter over what had happened and I knew that in time, if unchecked, it could destroy me. As I see it, personal forgiveness does not mean that a person does not face a just punishment for their crimes. Justice still has to be upheld and seen to be done. But on an individual level, forgiveness allows both parties to move on.'

In the end, she did not find out for sure how her husband died. However, she did find one of the people who were responsible for the death of her close friend Anatolie. He has admitted his actions and Lesley forgave him. It is not an easy decision, as Lesley says, 'Sometimes I don't feel like forgiving, but it's a choice I have made – and continue to make. This doesn't mean to say I have forgotten. How easy it would be to nurse the bitterness, but I choose not to. I choose to forgive – again, and again, and again. As long as is necessary, and as long as God gives me the courage to do so.'

Lesley Bilinda's story is told in her book, With What Remains (Hodder and Stoughton, 2006)

Lesley faces the challenge of forgiveness

NOTE Identity concealed to respect privacy



Photos Richard Hanson Tearfund

Resources

Books ■ Newsletters ■ Training materials

**tilz
website**

Tearfund's international publications can be downloaded free of charge from our website www.tearfund.org/tilz. Search for any topic to help in your work.

Peace-building within our communities

This ROOTS book looks at tools for peace-building and conflict transformation work. It contains case studies of peace and reconciliation work in communities. It is



available in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese. To order, please contact:

PO Box 200
Bridgnorth
Shropshire
WV16 4WQ
UK

Email: roots@tearfund.org
Website: www.tearfund.org/tilz

Help for self-help groups

Kindernothilfe is an organisation that helps to facilitate community self-help groups. It has designed a helpful website which covers issues such as social and political empowerment, participatory techniques, appropriate technology and micro-enterprise.

Website: www.self-help-approach.com

For more information contact:

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Insights into Participatory Video: A handbook for the field

by Nick and Chris Lunch

This handbook and CD Rom provide fieldworkers with a practical guide to using participatory video. This approach, where local people themselves make videos, is a tool for communication and empowerment which can help ordinary and marginalised people to gain confidence and a voice. These videos can be used for engaging with policy and decision-makers, for

participatory and community-led action research, monitoring and evaluation, as a way for communities to present development proposals and as a tool in conflict resolution.

The guide covers the basic practical techniques of participatory video, key games and activities, advice for facilitators, technical tips and equipment requirements.

It can be downloaded free in pdf format from:

www.insightshare.org/training_book.html

Print copies of the handbook cost £15 including postage. To order, contact:

Insight UK Office
3 Maidcroft Road
Oxford
OX4 3EN
UK

Email: nlunch@insightshare.org

Keeping Children Safe: A toolkit for child protection

This is a comprehensive pack of materials for people working in child protection across the world. The toolkit aims to support agencies at international, national and local levels in putting these standards into practice. It contains a book of basic standards for Child Protection, training exercises and materials, and a DVD and CD Rom to help with training and implementation of standards.

The toolkit costs £75, but NGOs, INGOs and not-for-profit agencies can obtain a copy free. To order please email: publications@keepingchildrensafe.org.uk

The Keeping Children Safe Toolkit and other information can be downloaded in electronic format from the Keeping Children Safe website: www.keepingchildrensafe.org.uk

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This CD Rom contains over 11,000 black and white line drawings (in compressed TIFF format for Windows® and Apple® Macintosh®), which are suitable for use in a wide variety of literacy materials such as newsletters, primers and posters.

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The CD Rom contains the twelve booklets in English, French and Portuguese. It costs 11.90 euros (with copies free to CTA members).

For more information, please email: cta@cta.nl

USEFUL WEBSITES

www.forgiver.net

On-line courses and training materials on the subject of forgiveness and reconciliation.

www.international-alert.org

This website has reports on conflict resolution and peace building efforts worldwide and materials to download for trainers, facilitators and others interested in transforming violent conflict.

International Alert publishes a resource pack that provides practical guidelines and tools for development and humanitarian organisations working in conflict situations. It is designed to help them place conflict-sensitivity at the centre of their situation analysis, programme design and monitoring processes. To order print copies of the resource pack please email:

communications@international-alert.org

To download copies of the resource pack or find out more, visit the website

www.conflictsensitivity.org

Malanda

Prayer, action, reconciliation

by Sadiki Byombuka

There has been war in the Democratic Republic of Congo since 1996. This conflict has many different causes, including the fight for political power, struggle for control over natural resources, bad governance, and ethnic and tribal differences.

The villagers of Malanda, where I was born, belong to two different tribes – the Babembe tribe and the Kinyarwanda-speaking tribe. These two tribes had a long tradition of peaceful life together despite their different customs. But in 2002, because of the war, Malanda was nearly a ghost village; 70% of its inhabitants had fled and many houses were burnt. Today, Malanda is vibrant again. The village and its local church are now considered as a model of forgiveness and reconciliation for the whole region. What happened?

In early 2003, CELPA Pentecostal church organised a retreat for local pastors. The theme of the retreat was forgiveness and reconciliation. Two pastors from Malanda attended the retreat – one was a member of the Kinyarwanda-speaking tribe who had remained in the village, and the other came from the forest area where other inhabitants of Malanda had found refuge. The two pastors made a commitment to work for forgiveness and reconciliation among the people of Malanda.

The task was not easy as the villagers of Malanda had become enemies and avoided meeting each other. One group



Photo Marcus Perkins Tearfund

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, communities torn apart by war need to be rebuilt.

was living in the forest and the other in the village. They were separated by a big river. Communication was difficult. Invitations to meet were issued through letters that the two pastors would leave hanging on a stick at the bridge over the river. The two pastors would meet at the bridge, but no one else would.

One step at a time

After a few days, each pastor began to bring a few people, mainly church members, to meet the other group at the bridge. But still each group would only stand on one side of the river and speak loudly to the other group. They were reluctant to come any closer to each other for fear of attack. Finally, some people from both sides, who had been members of the church prayer group that used to pray and fast together before the conflict, agreed to meet and pray together for three days on one side of the bridge. The two pastors joined them. Those who met forgave each other and prayed for forgiveness and reconciliation among the villagers. The first decision taken was to convince the village nurse and the school head teacher, who were with the group in the forest, to come back to the village to work under the protection of the church. The people who stayed in the village needed their

professional services in the dispensary and the school.

For two weeks they travelled every day between the two areas to work in the village. Then the nurse, the teacher and the families of two members of the prayer group decided to settle back in the village. An exchange of messages asking for forgiveness and offering forgiveness took place across the river. Movement of people, presents, goods and services across the river intensified. Reconciliation was happening. Many people came back to the village to rebuild their houses. Finally, the CELPA church decided to organise a prayer and celebration day in the village to mark full reconciliation. The event was open to all the villagers, regardless of their tribe or religion. People prayed, sang, danced and cried. In the end, the local chiefs and local church leaders made a public declaration that all Malanda villagers would now stand united to oppose any new attempt of division from inside or outside the village.

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