Peace Building In The Absence Of Conflict
The Red Elephant Foundation
Rachel Nduta, October, 2016.

Introduction: Peace

Peace is not just the absence of personal and direct violence (negative peace), but also the presence of justice, social cohesion and mutual acceptance.¹

According to the organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, peace building includes activities designed to prevent conflict through addressing structural and proximate causes of violence, promoting sustainable peace, delegitimizing violence as a dispute resolution strategy, building capacity within society to peacefully manage disputes and reducing vulnerability to triggers that may spark violence.²

Peace building is the development and nurturing of constructive personal, group, and political relationships across ethnic, religious, class, national and racial boundaries. It aims to resolve injustice in non violent ways and to transform the structural conditions that generate deadly conflict.³ According to the United Nations, An Agenda for Peace, Peace building cannot be achieved instantaneously; it is a long term process consisting of a wide range of activities associated with capacity building, reconciliation and societal transformation.⁴

So this begs the question, is peace building pragmatic in the absence of conflict?

It cannot be sufficiently stressed that sustainable peace building is a continuous effort with a long-term commitment. Transforming the way a society deals with conflict is a long-standing initiative. The central task of peace building is to create positive peace, a stable social equilibrium in which the surfacing of new disputes does not escalate into violence and war.⁵

The integrated approach to peace building must take into account the complex and multi dimensional nature of the human experience and rely on broad social participation. A sustainable transformative approach suggests that the key lies in the relationship of the involved parties, with all that the term encompasses at the psychological, spiritual, social, economic, political and military levels. Cultivating an infrastructure for peace building means that we are not merely interested in “ending” something that is not desired. We are oriented toward the building of relationships that in their totality form new patterns, processes and structures.⁶

Peace building therefore entails well thought transformations involving preventive, pre-hostility strategies for measures to remove the internal causes of conflict and to strengthen structural stability in a country against the threat of civil war. The United Nations Agenda for Peace, further states that pre-conflict peace building includes such measures like demilitarization, the control of small arms, institutional reforms, improved police and judicial systems, the monitoring of human rights, electoral reform and social economic development.⁷
Strategic peace building principles

Peace building requires all people to be aware of their power and create non violent forms of power to meet their human needs in collaboration with others. It strengthens and builds on local efforts and empowers others to act. Key principles of strategic peace building include but not limited to the following;

- Peace building is complex and it has multiple actors. It requires values, goals, commitment to human rights yet needs and it goes beyond conflict transformation. In the same strength, it cannot ignore structural forms of injustice and violence and it is founded on an ethic of interdependence, partnership and limiting violence.
- Peace building creates spaces where people interact in new ways expanding experience and honing new means of communication
- Peace building heals trauma, promotes justice and transforms relationships
- Peace building requires capacity and relationship building at multiple levels.
- Peace building responds to the root causes of violent conflict including unjust structures and it uses comprehensive methodology to achieve right relationships. It strategically includes advocacy at all levels and it is driven by community defined needs. A feasible peace building process focuses on strengthening and contributing to a vibrant civil society that promotes peace.

Democracy as an aspect of Peace building

In order to have sustainable peace, democratic institutions must be part of the creation of a new governance model. Democracy is the most appropriate governance model to resolve civil conflict and prevent its recurrence and the best option for ending conflict over the long-term. Democratic institutions provide greater opportunities for the non violent resolutions of conflict. It provides a forum for rational discussion of political problems and settlement of conflicting social interests between hostile parties.

A functioning, pluralistic and mature democracy is an essential component of sustainable peace. It addresses the articulated needs of society, provides a means of accountability for governments and sustains itself without violence.

Ways of Promoting Peace

Peace, at its largest scale, is to live without violent conflict or war. Peace building calls upon us to ensure that policies and procedures benefit the entire community. A fundamental first step is to establish and follow a clear, fair and just rule of law. This relies on full participation of diverse residents and stakeholders in its development and maintenance so that everyone’s needs and contributions can be incorporated.
A less peaceful world is a much more challenging place to fight inequality and want. We must build the ability of our governments to mediate disputes; we need to better address inequality and other underlying causes of violence and we need to understand and combat such factors as transnational crime and radicalization.\textsuperscript{14}

Certainly, there are diverse ways that can effect cohesion amongst societal groups; addressing common human needs such as identity and security that underlie violent conflict through training in conflict management, encouraging dialogue, promoting interactive problem solving, peace education, and carrying out joint projects between disputing groups are some of the tools that can be employed to achieve long term peace.\textsuperscript{15}

In Many respects, making Peace starts with an individual and it requires a personal commitment to non violence. Speaking out against prejudice and seeking out ways that are inclusive socially, economically and politically will not create peace instantly but it will undoubtedly create a culture of personal accountability.

Reconciliation

According to the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, peace building aims to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management and to lay the foundation for sustainable peace and development. Reconciliation must be proactive in seeking to create an encounter where people can focus on their relationship and share their perceptions, feelings and experiences with the goal of creating new perceptions and a new shared experience.\textsuperscript{16}

Conclusion

Prosperous peace building must be transformative, creating space for a wider set of actors-including women, youth, marginalized groups, civil society and the private sector to participate in national post conflict decision making. With respect to institution building, public administration and social services delivered equitably and accountably can help in addressing grievances and rebuilding a country’s legitimacy.\textsuperscript{17}

In light of these comparatives, it suitably apparent that peace building should be a consistent process that must to be pursued incessantly even in the absence of conflict. Our attitudes in the development agenda should focus peace resulting initiatives.
ENDNOTES


2 Alliance for Peace building www.allianceforpeacebuilding.org/2013/08/selected-definitions-of-peacebuilding/

3 KROC Institute for International Peace Studies www.kroc.nd.edu/about-us/what-peace-studies/what-strategic-peacebuilding

4 Beyond Intractability, Michele Maiese, 2003

5 Beyond Intractability, Peace building, Michelle Maiese, 2003
www.beyondintractability.org/essay/peacebuilding


7 Transcend Media Service, Solutions Oriented Journalism

8 Peace building Manual / Key principles for building peace www.wikibooks.org

9 Alliance for Peace building, Selected definitions of peace building, Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice, University of San Diego www.allianceforpeacebuilding.org/2013/08/selected-definitions-of-peacebuilding/

10 Catholic Relief Services, Introduction to Peace building

11 Insight on Conflict

12 A conceptual Model of Peace building and Democracy
Idris Evans, Jessica Lane, Jessica Pealer Megan Turner, 2013.

13 Charter for Compassion, Promoting peace www.charterforcompassion.org

14 United Nations Development
How can we promote peace and development at the same time?

15 Limiting Violence and Intimidation by Heidi Burges, Beyond Intractability www.beyondintractability.org/userguide/limitviolence-practitioners/peacebuilding-reconciliation-strategies
