

Working in Conflict - Conflict Transformation

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Biography and Session Introduction

- Xavier Ejoyi worked as a programme coordinator for peace building and conflict resolution of Danida's Democracy, Justice and Peace Programme in Uganda. He also worked as a senior policy research officer with Uganda's Child Rights NGO Network and, in New Delhi, worked with the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, East Africa Police Reforms Project as a senior research assistant. Xavier holds a BA Social Sciences degree from Makerere University, Uganda, an MA in Peace and Reconciliation Studies from Coventry University.
- He shares from his experiences in reconciliation and conflict resolution working with government and a broad range of stakeholders, background to conflicts, strategies, results and challenges.

Introduction

- ◉ Conflicts distort normal way of life, livelihood and wellbeing
- ◉ Destruction to lives as a result direct and indirect effects of conflict
- ◉ Displacement – usually in squalid settlements
- ◉ Human suffering and humanitarian disaster
- ◉ Distorts social relations – gender roles, childhood, gender based violence

What is Conflict?

- ◉ A disagreement through which parties involved perceive a threat to their needs, interests and positions
- ◉ When 2 or more individuals or groups pursue incompatible goals. Conflicts can be waged violently, as in a war, or nonviolently

NB: When channeled constructively into processes of resolution, conflicts can be beneficial

Stages of Conflict

- ◉ **Latent Stage:** Parties not yet aware of conflict
- ◉ **Perceived stage:** Parties aware a conflict exists
- ◉ **Felt Stage:** Stress and anxiety
- ◉ **Manifest/Violent:** Conflict is open and seen
- ◉ **Hurting Stalemate:** Mutual damage
- ◉ **Aftermath:** Outcome of conflict, resolution or dissolution

Underlying Causes of Conflict

- ◉ Negative identity – ethnic, religious, occupational, nationalistic etc. reinforced by stereotypes (we vs. them)
- ◉ Unequal access (perceived or real) to economic and social resources
- ◉ Resource based conflict – land, minerals, services etc
- ◉ Poor/bad governance – dominion, marginalization, oppression etc.

Proximate Conflict Causes/Trigger

- ◉ Elections
- ◉ Assassination of a key leader
- ◉ Drought & other climatic conditions
- ◉ Sudden inflation/collapse of a local currency
- ◉ Rapid change in unemployment

Dealing with Conflict in the Bible

- Romans 12: 17-21: we are called to live in peace with everyone. Overcoming evil with good
- John 17:20 – 21: Jesus prayer for unity among believers
- Mathew 5:9:
 - Peacemakers- peaceable temper, promote peace, reconcile contending parties, restore peace
 - Heirs of God of peace & love

Conflict Transformation

1. The process by which conflicts are transformed into peaceful outcomes.
2. The Process of engaging with and transforming the relationships, interests, discourses and, if necessary the very constitution of society that supports violent conflict

It differs from conflict resolution and conflict management in 3 ways:

- Introduces a positive orientation towards conflict
- Willingness to engage in the conflict
- Linear vs Circular

Conflict Resolution & Transformation

Issue	Conflict Resolution	Conflict Transformation
Focus	Content Centered	Relationship centered
Purpose	Arrive at agreement/solution	Promote a constructive change process
The Process	Immediacy of the relationship	Responding to symptoms & engaging systems
Time Frame	Short term	Medium to Long term
View of Conflict	Need to deescalate	Conflict as a dynamic ebb

The Case of Conflict Transformation

● The LRA Conflict in Northern Uganda

- 20 years of conflict between LRA and GoU
- Estimated 1.8 million displaced
- Over 25,000 children abducted
- Destruction to lives & property

● Context:

- Northern Uganda, the poorest region of Uganda
- Perceptions of political marginalization
- Past leaders originated from northern Uganda

LRA Conflict

- The LRA-GoU Peace Process: foundation for transformation
 - Key Agreements signed
 - Emergency Humanitarian interventions
 - Post conflict recovery & reconstruction
- Transitional Justice – the missing link
 - Criminal prosecution (ICC)
 - Reparations
 - Institutional Reform
 - Truth seeking

Emerging Challenges

- ◉ Psychosocial challenges – mental health, nodding disease, suicide, trauma etc.
- ◉ Land Conflict
- ◉ Youth unemployment
- ◉ Reconciliation/reintegration