



**GLOBAL
PARTNERSHIP
FOR THE
PREVENTION
OF ARMED
CONFLICT**



**Why and When
to Use the Media for
Conflict Prevention and
Peacebuilding**

Vladimir Bratic and
Lisa Schirch



Why and When to Use the Media for Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding

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Cover photo: Witness for Peace volunteer Doug Schirch interviews
Nicaraguan Contra forces in 1988 after their kidnapping a fellow
volunteer. *Photo by Paul Dix*

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ABOUT THIS ISSUE PAPER

The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) is a world-wide civil society-led network that calls for a fundamental change in dealing with violent conflict: a shift from reaction to prevention.

One of the key priorities for the network is awareness raising: GPPAC aims to reach a global consensus on peace building and conflict prevention, and believes the celebration of the UN International Day of Peace on the 21st of September on a global scale to be a great opportunity to reach this goal.

Its efforts are, however, in their infancy and synergy between individual actions by GPPAC members is still somewhat lacking. In general it can be said that the conflict prevention community has still to learn how to speak with a collective voice to the media and the public. ‘Selling’ conflict prevention comes with certain challenges and is at risk of being perceived as impractical idealism in the face of concrete policymaking.

The following paper - the sixth in a series of studies into issues related to conflict prevention and peacebuilding - therefore sets out how a civil society organization working in the field of conflict prevention and peacebuilding should deal and interact with the media.

As civil society organizations working on conflict prevention and peacebuilding we have a lot to tell the media, but we are not necessarily always effective in getting our message across. The paper maps what the difficulties are for civil society talking to the media, and what skills or knowledge they should acquire to overcome these obstacles.

The paper was written by Lisa Schirch and Vladimir Bratic.

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INTRODUCTION

History has shown that the media can incite people toward violence. Hitler used the media to create an entire worldview of hatred for Jews, homosexuals, and other minority groups. Rwanda's radio RTLM urged listeners to pick up machetes and take to the streets to kill what they called 'the cockroaches.' Broadcasters in the Balkans polarized local communities to the point where violence became an acceptable tool for addressing grievances. The media's impact on the escalation of conflict is more widely recognized than the media's impact on peacebuilding.

Yet it is not uncommon to hear experts pronounce that the media's impact on peacebuilding must be significant

given its powerful impact on conflict. However, this simple relationship must not be taken for granted and should be critically examined in order to most effectively use the media for conflict prevention and peacebuilding. There are ways the media can assist peacebuilding. The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Conflict's Awareness Raising Toolkit (this document can be downloaded from www.gppac.net and www.peoplebuildingpeace.org) details, amongst other things, *how* to use the media. Knowing *why* and *when* to use the media for conflict prevention and peacebuilding is the focus of this issue paper.

1. THE MEDIA'S ORIENTATION TOWARD CONFLICT

The media shape what we see and hear about conflict. The perspectives of those who run the media shape stories that are covered. Journalists have opinions and beliefs based on their experiences. Media owners have economic interests; they want to sell their stories and programs to a public who will buy their newspapers or watch their programs. Increasing corporate control over media in some countries also plays a role in controlling the types of stories that get covered and the way stories get framed.

Media owners and professionals decide what they think the public or some target audience wants to see and hear. A common journalist principle is this: "If it bleeds, it leads." That means violent conflict will be headline news, not news of cross-cultural dialogue and understanding. The media mostly covers conflict, not peacebuilding. This tendency to cover conflict and violence distorts reality and leads many people to think that conflict is pervasive and peace is abnormal.

Several studies confirm that the impact of the media on conflict is greater than the impact of the media on conflict prevention and peacebuilding.¹ Peace journalism scholar Gadi Wolfsfeld notes there is a "fundamental contradiction between the nature of a peace process and news values, the media often play a destructive role in attempts at making peace."² Those who run the media tend to favor four values: immediacy, drama, simplicity and ethnocentrism. These values

make it difficult to use the media for peace. The chart below, adapted from Wolfsfeld's work, illustrates the tendency for these values to favor violence rather than peace.

The media use the four values identified in the chart to decide what to cover as news, and what makes for entertainment. While many media professionals hold these values, they are likely to be in direct relation to the values of the public at large. The media are, in fact, running a business and as such, need to create a 'product' that will sell to customers who share these values.

It is important for conflict prevention and peacebuilding practitioners to understand these values and the dynamics of media decision-making on covering 'peace' news and entertainment. However, it does not preclude peace practitioners from utilizing the media to promote their own values.

Indeed, the media can play very positive roles in conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

- 1 Wolfsfeld G. (2004) *Media and the path to peace*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Hamelink. C. J. (2002) *Communication May Not Build Peace, But It Can Certainly Contribute To War*. Media Development 2.
- Gowing, N. (1997). *Media coverage: Help or hindrance in conflict prevention*. Retrieved January 21, 2002 from www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/ccpdc/pubs/media/medfr.htm
- 2 Gadi Wolfsfeld. *Ibid*, p. 15.

	Media Focus	No Media Focus
Immediacy	Specific actions and events	Long-term processes and policies (as in ongoing peace processes, dialogue, or mediation)
Drama	Violence, crisis or conflict Extremist behaviors Outrageous acts	Calm, controlled, moderate people getting along with each other (such as those participating in a dialogue)
Simplicity	Clear cut opinions, images, major personalities, two-sided conflicts	Complex opinions or explanations, institutions, root causes, multi-sided conflicts
Ethnocentrism	Our beliefs, myths and symbols Our suffering The brutality of some 'Other'	Their beliefs, myths, and symbols Their suffering Our brutality to 'Them'

2. FUNCTIONS OF THE MEDIA IN CONFLICT PREVENTION AND PEACEBUILDING

The media play a wide range of roles in our lives. Some of these roles are constructive and some are destructive. Recognizing the diversity within media professionals is a first step in critically analyzing how best to use the media to support conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

Media as Information Provider and Interpreter

The media provide people with important information about their environment (e.g. political, cultural, social issues) and respond to more imminent problems (weather, traffic, natural catastrophes, etc.). At least in part, people make decisions about whether to dress for warm or cold, choose political leaders to vote for in elections, and judge other groups in society based on the media.

The media interpret events beyond our physical realm and help us make sense of them. With the improvement of technologies and the advancement of new media such as the internet, media plays an increasingly more prominent role in our daily communication and entertainment.

For example, the Otpor Movement, developed in 1998 by Serbian students, responded to new restrictions on academic and media freedom with a highly unconventional movement called Otpor ('resistance' in Serbian). Otpor developed their own grassroots media campaign to provide information and inspiration to all who resisted the Milosevic government.³

Media as Watchdog

The media sometimes acts as a third party 'watchdog' who provide feedback to the public on local problems. Media can bring hidden stories out into the public. Investigative reports can surface public problems. For example, a US journalist uncovered and exposed a veteran's hospital that was dilapidated, rat-infested, and uncaring.⁴ This highlighted a problem of how US soldiers are treated before and after their time in the US military.

In Sierra Leone, a video depicting the serious impacts and extent of sexual violence has instigated discussion on the impact of the civil war in that country. The film, titled *Operation Fine Girl: Rape Used as a Weapon of War in Sierra*, was produced by human rights activists



The Otpor movement attracted a lot of attention with its graffiti and sticker campaigns. 'Gotov je' – 'he's finished' – is plastered across a Milosevic election poster.

with the international non-governmental organization WITNESS.⁵ The film demonstrates how media productions can play an important complementary role alongside other post conflict reconciliation processes to promote awareness of critical social issues and bring them into the public arena so they can be addressed.

Media as Gatekeeper

The media can also act as a gatekeeper who sets agendas, filters issues and tries to maintain a balance of views. Media like to portray themselves as 'balanced and fair,' even when they privately seek to promote a particular ideological set of ideas and limit the public's exposure to a wide array of information.

In 2006, a cartoonist in Denmark created international conflict with his message about Islam. The global tensions prompted extensive analysis on how and when media professionals should act as a gatekeeper to prevent certain expressions that could be deemed humiliating or offensive to some groups.

3 Milja Jovanovic. "Rage Against the Regime: The Otpor Movement in Serbia." In Van Tongeren, Paul, Malin Brenk, Marte hellema and Juliette Verhoeven (eds.) *People Building Peace II: Successful Stories of Civil Society*. Boulder, US: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005.

4 Dana Priest and Anne Hull. February 18, 2007. "Soldiers Face Neglect, Frustration At Army's Top Medical Facility." *Washington Post*. February 18, 2007. P. A01

2. FUNCTIONS OF THE MEDIA IN CONFLICT PREVENTION AND PEACEBUILDING



A girl portrayed in the WITNESS documentary Operation Fine Girl

Media as Policymaker

The media has influence on policymakers, particularly as they think about how to prevent and respond to violent conflict. The media is also a tool of policymakers to get across their message. Some theorists even claim that CNN has taken over policymaking - at least in humanitarian disaster situations. Images on CNN of genocide, famine, and violence force policymakers to intervene militarily to stop death, even if they do not think it is in the best interest of their country to adopt this policy. In Bosnia, for example, the media played a very important role in motivating the public to press their policymakers to intervene to stop the aggression.⁶

Media as Diplomat

Sometimes the media is used to cover diplomatic initiatives and send messages back and forth between sides of a conflict. While policymakers usually prefer secret negotiations, sometimes there are no direct channels of communication. If one side wants to test reactions to a negotiation proposal, they may send signals and messages to other groups through the media. At times, the news media will invite leaders of opposing groups or nations onto a TV or radio program to talk with each other. The media may help to create bridges among enemies and build confidence needed to open negotiations.⁷

For example, an American television show *Nightline* regularly invites two or more people from different sides of a public policy issue to be on the show and dialogue with each other. The host, Ted Koppel, makes a point of trying to find common ground between the two sides.

Media as Peace Promotor

Media events can be used at the beginning of negotiations to build confidence, facilitate negotiations or break diplomatic deadlocks to create a climate conducive to negotiation.

Media events such as press releases, rock concerts, or radio programs can celebrate peace agreements and negotiations. The media events may help to promote and mobilize public support for agreements.

For example, in Burundi, Studio Ijambo is attempting to harness the power of radio for constructive purposes. Beginning in 1995, Search for Common Ground set up Studio Ijambo with a team of twenty Hutu and Tutsi journalists to promote dialogue, peace, and reconciliation. Studio Ijambo produces approximately one hundred radio programs per month to create a steady campaign to promote peace.⁸

Media as Bridge Builder

The media can promote positive relationships between groups, particularly in conflicts over national, ethnic, religious identity. The media can lessen polarization between groups in the following ways:

- *Showing the other in a similar light to self*
Iraqi news media that emphasize how both Shia and Sunni suffer from violence help build a bridge of common empathy.

5. Gregory, Sam. 2005. "Operation Fine Girl Exposes Sexual Violence Witness in Sierra Leone." In Van Tongeren, Paul, Malin Brenk, Marte Hellema and Juliette Verhoeven (eds.) *People Building Peace II: Successful Stories of Civil Society*. Boulder, USA: Lynne Rienner Publishers

6. Gilboa, Eytan. 2002. *Media and Conflict: Framing Issues, Making Policy, Shaping Opinions*. Ardsley, NY, USA: Transnational Publishers Inc.

7. Ibid.

8. Gilboa, Eytan. 2002. *Media and Conflict: Framing Issues, Making Policy, Shaping Opinions*. Ardsley, NY, USA: Transnational Publishers Inc.

2. FUNCTIONS OF THE MEDIA IN CONFLICT PREVENTION AND PEACEBUILDING



Journalists at a press conference during GPPAC,s 2006 International Steering Group meeting in Nairobi, Kenya

- *Depicting people with the same types of problems*
For example, an HBO documentary featured Palestinian and Israeli mothers who share the same grief, both losing children to violence victimized by the conflict.⁹
- *Sharing similar interests and positions*
For example, a TV show known as ‘Heroes from Rwanda’ featured stories about people who saved members of the opposite ethnic group from the killings, while often risking their own lives.
- *Condemning violence*
For example, the Republicans and the Unionists in Omagh, Northern Ireland jointly renounced violent attacks in all newspapers and media in August 1998.

Seeing the common ground between one’s own group and another group of people builds empathy. Such thinking leads toward depolarizing and normalizing relations between the groups in conflict.

Effective use of the media to prevent conflict and build peace requires a careful study of the lessons of social marketing to prepare for effective use of the media.

⁹ (e.g. HBO, October, 2007)

3. THE TRANSFORMATIVE GOALS OF CONFLICT PREVENTION AND PEACEBUILDING

The world of media works as a business. People ‘buy’ their news, entertainment, and any information that they want to receive through a media channel. The field of social marketing blends the vast knowledge of how to use the media to sell a commercial product toward the goal of social movements wanting to sell an idea or a new behavior.¹⁰

Social marketing campaigns have used the media to sell ideas as products. For example, to community development and health workers, breastfeeding is an idea and a new behavior - a product - to sell. For environmentalists, getting people to stop littering is a behavior - a product - to sell. Groups use the media to sell their ideas, or to get people to adopt a new behavior or stop a former way of behaving.

The field of conflict prevention and peacebuilding has done little to lay out our specific products within a marketing framework. Usually, discussions of using the media aim for some general goal to ‘promote peace.’ Peace itself is not really a product. It is an idea, but does not necessarily suggest automatically some new specific behavior that the public should adopt. The first step in assessing the wisdom of using the media for conflict prevention and peacebuilding in a region is to determine the specific goals of local conflict prevention and peacebuilding experts that can be ‘packaged’ as tangible and realistic products to sell.

In general, conflict prevention and peacebuilding programs aim to change attitudes and behaviors away

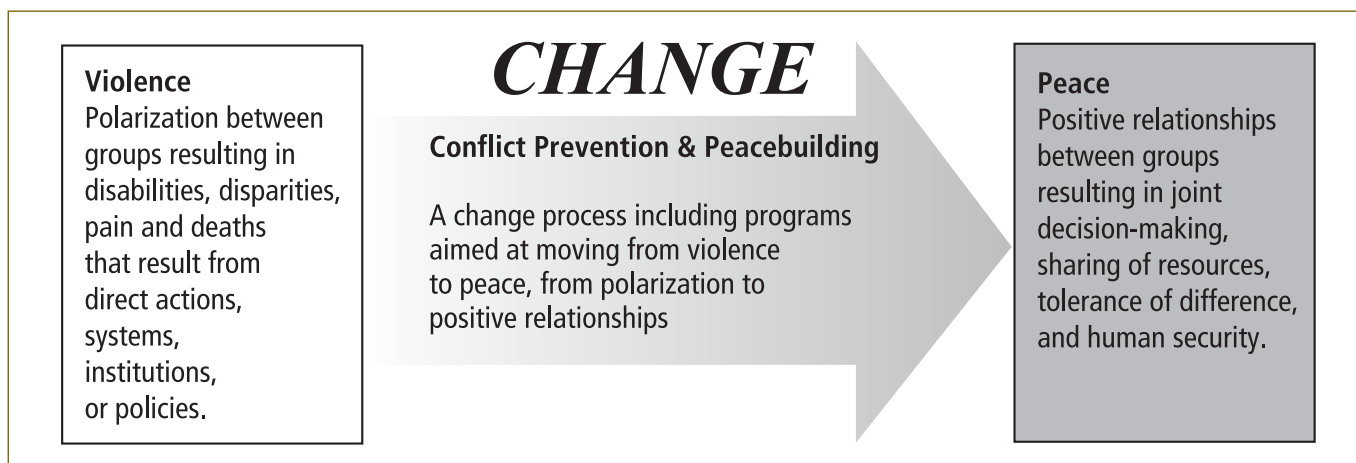
from violence and toward peace. Conflict prevention and peacebuilding respond to violence of all kinds - direct forms of armed violence and structural forms of violence that discriminate against certain ethnic, religious, gender, or economic class groups. A wide range of programs and projects aim to build relationships across the lines of conflict - building a foundation for open communication.

Violence polarizes people - pitting some groups against other groups of people. Peacebuilding seeks to build a bridge between groups of people - de-polarizing people’s attitudes and behaviors toward each other. As illustrated in the diagram below, all conflict prevention and peacebuilding aim to be part of this change process.

The goal of conflict prevention and peacebuilding, in general, is to move from polarization to positive relationships. Specific conflict prevention and peacebuilding programs and projects hold more specific goals, as detailed in the box below.

The new behavior you want people to adopt is the ‘product’ in a social marketing campaign. The new behavior needs to be something that is attractive to and in the interest of the consumer in the target audience. If people do not feel they have a problem or that their situation could be improved, they are unlikely to adopt a new product.

10 Kline Weinreich, Nedra. 1999. *The Art of Social Marketing*. London, UK: SAGE Publications.



3. THE TRANSFORMATIVE GOALS OF CONFLICT PREVENTION AND PEACEBUILDING

Examples of Specific Goals in Conflict Prevention & Peacebuilding Programs

- A Peacekeeping Mission might aim to improve the relationship between international peacekeepers and local host communities.
- A Dialogue Project might aim to include key leaders in a community in a dialogue.
- A Trauma Healing Project might aim to educate a certain number of people in skills for trauma awareness and resilience.
- A Restorative Justice Project might aim to persuade communities to reintegrate former child soldiers.
- A Peace Process might aim to encourage participation in and acceptance of a national peace agreement.

Peacebuilding products can include physical products (building a mediation center); services (using a mediation service, taking a peacebuilding training course, or joining a dialogue group); practices (talking to their neighbors of a different religion); or more intangible ideas like creating a culture of peace.

For example, in a peacebuilding project encouraging women in a community to join a women's dialogue group, the 'product' is the dialogue group. A marketing campaign to encourage women to join the dialogue group needs to think about how the product meets the interests of women in that community. Is the product attractive? Is it in women's interests? Media could be used to attract specific target groups to join a dialogue program. Like selling a product, the media would sell the idea of joining the dialogue by highlighting the benefits of joining the dialogue and possibly the costs or risks of not joining in a dialogue.

Conflict prevention and peacebuilding practitioners can best utilize the media if they are clear about their goal (their product) and also know who, specifically, they want to communicate to through the media. Social marketing is never aimed at the 'general public.' A sophisticated and strategic use of the media is more focused on particular target and segment audiences.

For example, if the goal of a social marketing campaign is to stop littering, first research needs to be done to

determine who is littering the most. In many cultures, young men are the chief culprits. In this case, young men are the 'target audience.' Successful media campaigns aimed at stopping littering use specific messages like 'littering isn't cool' and target magazines, radio programs and billboards seen by young men.

If a peacebuilding organization wants to promote cross-cultural dialogue between ethnic groups, they should think about who, in particular, they would like to join the dialogue. The media can be used successfully only when peacebuilding organizations have done the hard work to narrow down their goals and target audiences. Knowing the specific goals and the audiences required to meet their goal enables peacebuilding professionals to be more sophisticated in their choice of when and where to use the media.

The media can help achieve goals in conflict prevention and peacebuilding when paired with approaches or strategies. The media is not appropriate for all peacebuilding efforts however. Highly-sensitive negotiations, for example, are often best kept quiet without the pressure brought by media seeking to highlight areas of conflict (which helps them sell their media products) rather than serve to foster a focus on common ground, a problem-solving orientation, and hopefulness required for diplomacy.

4. HOW DOES CHANGE HAPPEN?

As these goals illustrate, conflict prevention and peacebuilding aim to invoke several types of changes:

- **Cognitive Changes**
the ways people think about conflict and other groups of people
- **Attitudinal Changes**
the attitudes people hold toward each other
- **Behavioral Changes**
the ways people act with each other

Classic theories of change tell us that people change through compulsion, manipulation, persuasion or a combination of these forces. People are forced or feel *compulsion* to change when threatened with negative impacts such as violence if they do not change. People are *manipulated* to change when they are misled to think that change is good for them. People are *persuaded* to change when they are fully convinced and voluntarily decide to change. Persuasion includes talking, teaching, and media dissemination of new ideas.

Since peacebuilding centers on values of empowerment and self-determination, clearly most peacebuilding efforts aim to persuade rather than force or manipulate people to change. It has been shown that when people's cognition, attitudes, or behaviors change by their own choice, as a result of persuasion, the changes are more likely to be long lasting than if the changes were brought about by force or manipulation.

A growing number of studies have begun constructing the strategy and conditions for positive use of media in conflict prevention and peacebuilding.¹¹ Those studies recognize the limitations of media effects on people as they have been described in the literature. Some of those conclusions have helped us realize the power and the limitations of media impact on people and the society:

1. The most obvious effect of media is in its ability to increase *cognitive knowledge* by supplying people with information. The media help to set the public agenda and frame the scope of public discussion by providing and limiting the range of ideas from which we can choose.

2. Some well-crafted messages and media formats have been effective in *modifying and altering attitudes*. The media can prompt us to like or dislike an idea, attitude or behavior.
3. The media *rarely directly affects behaviors*. The media does not work like a hypodermic needle, where something can be injected into the body to make people behave in a desired way. It is unlikely that showing something on TV will propel people to behave in a new way. The media's impact on behavior is more complex and more likely to work on attitudes and opinions that shape behaviors rather than directly affecting people's actions or behaviors.

Because of this important influence, the media are often expected to help further the impact of social movements. In the 1970s and 1980s, the development community incorporated media programs in their work across the world. Practitioners utilized media to assist with some of the most acute issues affecting development - AIDS prevention, poverty elimination, population control, and agricultural development. In addition to the straightforward dissemination of information - media can simply saturate the environment with information in support of a development agency's cause. Development organizations soon started exploring other media formats and techniques in order to increase the effectiveness of its messages. In addition to awareness raising projects through broadcasting and print publications, development agencies also employed entertainment programming and socially oriented marketing through advertisements.

Some peacebuilding professionals have built upon the success of development agencies by employing media in their work. The United Nations uses media to assist with its peacekeeping missions, the UN High Commission on Refugees uses media to mitigate the problems facing refugees in conflict. The Organization for Security Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) uses media to disseminate information on peace agreements and involve people in the electoral process. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) like Search for Common Ground (SFCG), Foundation Hironnelle, and IMPACS developed their own

4. HOW DOES CHANGE HAPPEN?



Honouring Peace Heroes at an event held by Search for Common Ground's Studio Ijambo

media productions to address the fundamentals of conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Many other civil society agencies and organizations that are not producing their own media programming are organizing their work in such a way so that it can be covered by existing media. It is widely expected that civil society organizations will seek media coverage.

It is important to remain optimistic about using media in conflict prevention and peacebuilding while at the same time remaining grounded in the theoretical evidence from the literature about realistic media abilities. New studies began to outline the initial arguments about media's ability to assist the goals of peacebuilding.¹² These studies describe a variety of media activities that can be used in conflict prevention and peacebuilding: on the one hand, involving more prominent Track I diplomatic actors (e.g. creating democratic media institutions in Iraq) while others rely on Track II non-

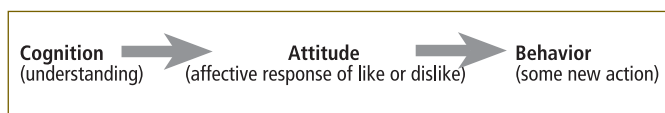
officials (helping organize new media outlets, programs and campaigns such as Talking Drum Studio in Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone, Studio Ijambo in Burundi, or OBN television in Bosnia).

- 11 Price, M. E. and Thompson, M. (2002) *Forging Peace: Intervention, Human Rights, and the Management of Media Space*, Indiana University Press.
- Loewenberg, S. and Bonde, B.N. (eds.) (2007). *Media in Conflict Prevention and Peace Building Strategies*. DW-Media Services GmbH: Germany.
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- 12 Bratic, V. (2006). Examining peace-oriented media in areas of violent conflict. *Communication and Conflict Online*, 5:1.
- Price, M, Al-Marashi, I. Griffin, D. (2006). *Towards an Understanding of Media Policy in Iraq: A Foreword and Two Reports*. Center for Global Communication Studies Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania.
- Lynch, J. & McGoldrick, A. (2005). *Peace Journalism*. Boulder CO: Rowman and Littlefield.

5. STAGES OF CHANGE

Another attempt to answer how media can impact peace is offered through the prism of behavioral change theoretical models. Over the last half of the previous century, social scientists described the impact of communication on human behavior. Though they come from different scientific disciplines (e. g. psychology, sociology etc.) they all agree in their description of the model as a process of consecutive steps. All the models of behavioral change agree on the multiple stages necessary for sustainable change to occur.

The earliest attempt to explain behavioral change established a hierarchy of the process: initial *cognition* is followed by *affective response* (like or dislike) and ends with a new behavior or *action*.



Other theorists claim this process is a bit more complicated. They say that first people gain *knowledge* and become aware of some new idea - such as peacebuilding. Then they may or may not become *persuaded* to believe that peacebuilding is a good idea or that it works. Then they *decide* whether they support peacebuilding, as a concept. If they do support it, they may *implement* that support by voting for a politician who promotes peacebuilding values or they may implement their support by donating to peacebuilding organizations. Finally, people revisit their decision to support peacebuilding and *confirm* their belief in its value.



Changed behavior is the result of multiple sets of changes in understanding and attitudes toward some

new idea. What has been well established in the last 80 years of research the effects of media is that while the direct impact of the media on people’s behavior is uncertain, some direct links between the ability of media to sufficiently supply the information and attitudes have been confirmed. Unfortunately, these two kinds of impacts are represented primarily in the first two stages of the behavioral change models. Effects theory supplies the evidence of media’s impact mainly on cognition and attitudes.¹³

If these stages of behavioral change were generally accepted, the following model of action would need to be considered for using media in conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

The table below outlines specific media genres and techniques that are most suitable for each of the stages of behavioral change process: Information programming, Entertainment, and Advertising. The impact of the media decreases as we move from cognition to behavioral change. This is the point when the information has been acquired, the attitude toward it has been established and the audience is ready to make a decision and implement it.

Behavioral change is more influenced by environmental factors, such as current events, the escalation of conflict, or the rise of a new leader. Different variables impact the decision to make a behavior change and its implementation, and some act as constraints that can prevent significant positive media effects. For example, a new incidence of violent conflict often drives the audience toward decisions that are not always in accordance with their cognitive value systems. In a typical ‘fight, flight, or freeze’ reaction to violence, the emotional core of the brain takes over and people revert

Type of Change	Cognitive Change	Attitudinal change	Behavioral change
Type of media best suited to bring about change	Information programming	Entertainment, Advertising	Cumulative impact of media and other social institutions

5. STAGES OF CHANGE

to acting in automatic or instinctual ways for self-preservation, as detailed further later in this paper. Often, the impact of immediate violence may have a stronger impact on people's behavior than media messages may ever hope to achieve.

Cognitive change: The Role of Information Programming

All three models suggest that the initial stage of behavioral change (knowledge, pre-contemplation/contemplation, cognition) deals with the supply of information supporting the desired change. A change of behavior at the initial level is instigated. The process of positive change toward peace begins when a new piece of information is made available, safely transferred and acquired by the targeted audience. This change simply cannot occur if peace-oriented information cannot find a way to the audience. In other words, the most persuasive and the best designed media content will remain ineffective if the audience does not have a chance to be exposed to it.

Journalism efficiently supplies information to wide audiences. Therefore, impacting the production of news and journalists' sphere of influence is an important asset to peacebuilding practitioners. The impact of journalism on peace and the responsibility of journalists in conflict prevention and peacebuilding have been passionately debated in the last decade. Two schools of thought have emerged in response to the role of journalism in conflict: standard professional journalism and peace (conflict sensitive) journalism.

On one side is the group of professional journalism proponents who suggest that the news media inherently facilitate conditions that support a peaceful society. To a large degree, professional and ethical journalism, if operated within democratic discourse, contributes to a free exchange of information, informs and educates citizens, thus enabling them to become better equipped with knowledge and participate in the political process. Consequently, citizens under those conditions are in the best position to contribute toward conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

Thus, professional journalists help the peace process by simply being there to facilitate the dialogue between the parties, citizens and the government. One of the best examples of the influence by professional journalists during a peace process is the case of the press in Northern Ireland. Since good journalism has a long history and a strong position in this society, journalists were instrumental in facilitating dialogue between the adversaries. This was done indirectly by releasing political statements and messages through the media, which were received by the other side. Such practices called 'megaphone diplomacy' enable the media to strengthen the dialogue (knowingly and unknowingly) and still maintain professional integrity. Amplifying the voice of different stakeholders in a conflict in a way that fosters analysis of both differences and common ground is an everyday routine of professional journalism.

On the other hand, some journalists believe that standard journalistic practices are not sufficient when news production occurs during conflict. In the mid-nineties, BBC journalist Martin Bell came forth with a warning that the well-intentioned BBC recipe for impartiality and objectivity loses meaning in the circumstances of war. Disappointed with reports emerging from then-besieged Sarajevo which gave the same air-time to both victim and the aggressor, Bell renounced the ideal of absolute objectivity and proposed a counter-thesis of journalism of attachment, or engaged journalism.¹⁴

At the same Johan Galtung coined the idea of 'peace journalism' which advocates for conflict transformation through constructive discourse.¹⁵ In peace journalism, the only problem is not people. Rather the problem is that people are using violence to address conflicts. Journalism begins then, with understanding different

13 Severin, W. & Tankard, J. (1992). *Communication theories: Origins, methods, and uses of the mass media*. (3rd ed.). New York: Longman.

14 Bell, M. (1998) 'The journalism of attachment', in Kieran, M. (ed.) *Media Ethics*, Routledge, pp. 15-22.

15 Galtung, J. (2002). Peace Journalism - A Challenge. In Kempf, Wilhelm & Heikki, Loustarinen (eds.) *Journalism and the New World Order, Vol.2. Studying the War and the Media*. Gothenburg: Nordicom.

group's objectives and needs within their cultural and historic context. Instead of a careful recitation of losses and damage caused or experienced by each side, peace journalism focuses on shared experiences of suffering. This kind of journalism is openly inclined to peace discourse, and cannot be achieved through the ordinary distribution of information. It requires a proactive approach to the constructs of reporting, and openly admits a bias towards peaceful ways of addressing conflict.

This proactive dissemination of information often requires a delicate information balance. Blatant and overzealous imposition of information may cause an unwanted opposite reaction. The audience does not want to be under the impression that they are being pushed to make a decision without their own input.

This is why the memo leaked by Tom Kelly in 1998 to the British press regarding the McCann Erickson promotion of the Northern Irish peace agreement warns that a blatant push for a certain outcome may not bring positive results:

While any overt manipulation could be counterproductive, a carefully coordinated timetable

*of statements from key people will be helpful in giving our message credibility with those they represent. It has the added benefit of providing a fresh face for that message, and ensuring that it is not only government which is seen to be selling the process.*¹⁶

Attitudinal Change: The role of Entertainment Programming and Advertising

Once information is acquired, an audience tends to position itself toward the message. An audience contemplates the value of the message and immediately formulates a positive or a negative response to it. The audience can either be persuaded or remain unconvinced.

Developing a positive relationship with a former enemy due to new knowledge or experience can be accomplished through creation or re-creation of positive attitudes toward a group of people. The media can contribute toward creating positive attitudes. A number of brand new products and service are introduced each year and the process of positive attitude building is carried out successfully through the media in front of our eyes. Marketing and advertising represent an entire industry that specializes in creating attitudes. In campaigning and advertising, the messages are designed to seek out the

Northern Ireland Case Study¹⁷

Good Friday of 1998 will remain a special day in the history of Britain and the Republic of Ireland. On that day, one of the longest conflicts in modern history seems to have ended when the political parties of Northern Ireland negotiated a political settlement known as 'the Good Friday Agreement.' Northern Ireland's previous three decades of 'troubles' ended in a settlement between the Catholic and Protestant representatives. The final step

towards the acceptance of the Good Friday Agreement was to be a referendum. There was significant animosity toward the agreement on both sides, and for some time it seemed as if the agreement would not gain enough support from the public.

The British government decided to ask for help from an unlikely source – McCann Erickson, one of the world's leading marketing organizations. McCann Erickson's

response was to develop a media campaign emphasizing the benefits of the Good Friday Agreement. A month later, the agreement received the support of 71 percent of the people from both sides of the community (Ark Survey, 1998). It is impossible to gauge the campaign's direct influence on the people's decision to support the agreement. However, it was documented that the advertising campaign played a role in the acceptance of the political agreement, leading to a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

5. STAGES OF CHANGE



Vietnamese propaganda banner in Saigon

audience. Campaigns anticipate audience activities and aim to intercept them to deliver the message.

This is where the billboards, posters, leaflets, and also audio, video and print advertisements are used to gain maximum impact. Campaigns that used a combination of these resources have been conducted in peace processes in Ireland, Macedonia, Bosnia and the Great Lakes region of

Africa. For example, social marketing advertising through the media made a significant impact on the success of a peace agreement in Northern Ireland.

Entertainment programming has been known to have the highest appeal to the widest number of audiences. For this reason, in many cases the attractive mass appeal format of radio drama or soap-operas is used to deliver a message about conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Other appealing formats such as music, theater and entertainment in information programming were found to be successful¹⁸. Search for Common Ground (SFCG) used popular music in Angola and Macedonia, and street theater in Liberia and Macedonia. A music project from Angola successfully exploited the association of the message with popular public personalities, when the most popular pop stars performed the peace song ‘A Paz E Que O Povo Chama’ (People Are Calling for Peace).¹⁹

Behavioral change: The cumulative impact of media and other social institutions

Peace media efforts are most effective if they are integrated into more than a few isolated projects. The

impact of conflict is so pervasive that it would be unrealistic to expect a positive impact from a single radio or television project. Peace messages need to be incorporated into the majority of media and would benefit from support by a wider public structure and social institutions.

There is no doubt that conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts ought to be concerned with media techniques and practices through journalism, entertainment and social marketing advertisements. On the other hand, the success of such media programs depends primarily on the readiness of institutions to end conflict policies. Media do not have the ability to execute the peacebuilding effort on their own. Legal, political, economic and other social institutions must assist in transforming the conflict. In the absence of an integrated effort, media cannot manage structural and cultural violence. The media must be understood as an integral and important segment of peace development. Despite the ability to shape attitudes and opinions in favor of peace, media institutions remain only a segment of a conflict society. The transformation of violent conflict requires an integrated plan of action.

Ideally, the contribution of media to peace development ought to be considered during peace negotiations between the antagonists. Unfortunately, no recent peace agreements (i.e. the Dayton Peace Agreement that ended the Bosnian conflict, the Oslo Peace Agreement between Israelis and Palestinians nor the Good Friday Peace Agreement in Northern Ireland) even mention media as possible contributors to peacebuilding. While

16 Kelly, T. (1998). *Text of the Northern Ireland Office document on the proposed referendum which was leaked to the Democratic Unionist Party on 26 March 1998*. Retrieved March 12, 2001 from <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/peace/docs/nio26398.htm>

17 Ark Surveys, (1998). *The 1998 referendums*. Retrieved on April 16, 2005 from <http://www.ark.ac.uk/elections/fref98.htm>

18 SFCG. (Search for Common Ground) (2002a). *Macedonia: Nashe Maalo*. Retrieved January 25, 2002, from www.sfcg.org
SFCG, (Search for Common Ground) (2004e). *Talking Drum Studio-Liberia Moves Forward with Six Radio Programs*. Retrieved July 20, 2004 from http://www.sfcg.org/programmes/liberia/liberia_drum.html

19 SFCG. (Search for Common Ground) (2004a). *Angola peace song*. Retrieved July 20, 2004 from http://www.sfcg.org/programmes/angola/angola_song.html

the agreements include lengthy descriptions on the transformation of most social institutions, media development is omitted.

While media can contribute toward the formation of attitudes, opinions and increased knowledge and awareness by supplying information, the limiting factor is the uncertainty that this positive impact will transfer to behavior or result in action. For this to happen, a number of other variables need to be aligned with the media effort. Because action or behavior is dependent on many outside variables and because these variables contribute to the end result as much as any form of communication initiative, only the true integration of all media genres into a greater peacebuilding strategy can insure a significant move toward a peaceful society. In today's media environment it is not enough to employ just a few uncoordinated messages. The following example from Bosnia explains the need for a cumulative impact and organization of media:

“During the spring and summer of 1996, the main international powers that were behind the Dayton peace agreement decided to set up an alternative system to the national television stations which was going to be different, much better, more democratic and cover the entire country. This was supposed to erase the negative influence of the national television stations. This is how OBN and radio FERN came into being. This is an excellent idea. What was wrong was that this was the single effort. One isolated project never had a chance to combat the influence of powerful national stations.”
Zoran Udovicic, director of the Bosnian NGO Media Plan.²⁰

²⁰ Udovicic, Zoran. (2003). Interview by author. Tape recording. Sarajevo, Bosnia. August 12.

6. WHY DO PEOPLE CHANGE?

As noted above, behavioral change is most likely to be achieved through an congruence between the repetition of a peace message via different media channels and an environment which creates space for people to thoughtfully consider change. Scholars claim that people change as a result of a combination of forces. Harvard University scholar Howard Gardner, for example, claims there are seven factors in why people change their minds, attitudes, and behaviors.²¹

1. Logic and Reason

People change their minds because they are convinced that it makes sense - there is a logic to the change. For example, many conflict prevention scholars lay out the logic of preventing violent conflict because it costs less to prevent violence than it does to clean up after violence.

2. Research

People change their minds because they are convinced by research that the something is effective. For example, the current drive to prove that conflict prevention and peacebuilding 'work' involves careful quantitative and qualitative research on specific projects, comparing towns where there are peace programs to towns without peace projects to see if the 'peace intervention' has made a difference.

3. Resonance

People change their minds because a new idea, attitude or behavior intuitively 'feels right' to them or because they admire someone who persuades them to change. For example, the rock singer Bono has convinced many people that alleviating poverty in Africa is important because people resonate with his charismatic arguments for caring about people.

4. Representations

People change their minds when they see a new idea, attitude or behavior represented in multiple ways or contexts. For example, anti-smoking campaigns use many different commercials on radio, TV, and billboards and use different images and words to represent their message aimed at stopping smoking.

5. Resources and Rewards

People change their minds when they believe they will be rewarded for adopting a new idea, attitude or behavior. For example, some business leaders have tried to convince others that 'peace is profitable.' Other economists note that key leaders often decide to support war or violence because it is in their economic interest to do so.

6. Real World Events

People change their minds because they are influenced by an event that happens, such as an attack, economic depression, hurricane, or an era of peace. For example, the Tsunami that hit Asian countries significantly changed the conflict in Indonesia, creating a context where a peace settlement became possible. In Sri Lanka, however, the Tsunami had an opposite effect as groups accused aid groups of favoring some groups over others.

7. Resistances

People decide NOT to change their minds when the resistances to change are stronger than the forces for change. Biologists say that ways of thinking may become physically engraved in the actual texture of the brain. Changing deeply engrained patterns of thinking may pose too great of a resistance to logic, research, resonance, representations, rewards or real world events. For example, many white Americans changed their mind about African Americans during the U.S. Civil Rights Movement. But those groups with deeply engrained racism such as the Ku Klux Klan, continue to function today. Their patterns of thinking about race are so central to everything else they believe that it is much more difficult to change their minds with real world events portrayed in the media, reason, research or other persuasive methods by charismatic leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr.

Most of the time people change their minds gradually, not in one specific moment or with one revelation. Most people are not aware that they are changing their minds,

21 Gardner, Howard 2004. *Changing Minds: The Art and Science of Changing our own and other people's minds*. Massachusetts, USA: Harvard Business School Press.

22 Ibid, pag 211.

6. WHY DO PEOPLE CHANGE?



The multi-ethnic Kosovar Youth Council presents its activities in a radio interview

attitudes or behaviors, so surveys asking people direct questions about whether they have changed their minds are rarely effective. People change their minds usually when the first six elements listed above are fully present and when resistances to change are identified and successfully addressed.²²

These elements of change are morally-neutral; meaning that people with bad intentions of inciting violence can equally use these principles to that effect. Those working for peace should be well aware, in fact, that the media is more likely to contribute to violence than peace.

People make decisions about whether to adopt some new idea, attitude, or behavior - the ‘peacebuilding

product’ - based on considerations of both benefits and costs. People will ask “What will I get out of this?” And “What is in it for me?” And they will ask “How much will this cost me financially, emotionally, and physically? What will I have to give up to do this new behavior?” Peacebuilding professionals need to think about carefully framing the benefits and addressing the costs of the new behavior that supports conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

For example, if a peacebuilding organization is advertising on billboards and radio programs to ask people to join a dialogue, people in the community would want to know how they might benefit from joining a dialogue group. Will they meet new people, understand the conflict better, develop a solution to their community’s problems? And social marketers of a dialogue program will have to think about the costs of joining the dialogue to different segments of the population. Will women need to leave their children at home to attend the dialogue or will there be childcare? Will their husbands be angry? Will they miss time at their workplace?

Strategic use of the media requires careful consideration to all the possible obstacles to change.

7. THE IMPACT OF TRAUMA AND CONFLICT ON COGNITION

Conflicts are complex - it is usually not possible to narrow down their causes to a few specific triggers. Conflicts are also dynamic, they constantly change. It is not uncommon to see a seemingly minor and isolated event sway a conflict towards violence. In conflict environments, even when the best media projects succeed and civil society performs to the maximum, violence can be hard to avoid. In Howard Gardner's words, the 'resistance' is too great. Efforts to use the media to promote peace in the midst of violent conflict are difficult for a number of reasons.

Conflict and trauma impact the brain and how people think. Understanding the basics of brain biology allows for greater understanding of how and why some forms of communication - including the media - are able to 'penetrate' the brain better than others.

There are three parts to our brains:

- **The Neocortex:** our rational, thinking brain.
- **The Limbic System:** the 'emotional brain' and the 'first alert' system that responds to fear.
- **The Brain Stem:** our older, instinctual brain which controls automatic reactions such as fight, flight or freeze responses.

The neocortex responds well to reason, logic, research, calculating rewards of adopting new behaviors and processing real world events; the facts of peacebuilding. But the limbic system and the brain stem are responsible for how people respond emotionally and intuitively.

In the midst of conflict, people are often responding from their 'emotional brain' rather than the 'rational' brain. Facts and figures - the logic of peacebuilding - may not make an impact. But emotional stories of courageous people undertaking dramatic actions for peace, told through the arts and media, can sometimes make a profound impact on people.

Media audiences are primarily affected by powerful stories told in first-person narratives by people directly involved. Simple stories work the best, since large audiences are usually very diverse and little can be assumed about their shared knowledge or

understanding. Good journalism starts out with a personal story, and then links this to some broader social trend. People begin listening and become emotionally engaged in a story first. Then they begin to understand the broader ideas related to the story.

Communication researchers estimate that between sixty to ninety percent of communicated meaning comes from nonverbal cues. People gather information using all the body's senses and communicate both verbally and nonverbally. Words are limiting. When humans feel strong emotions, it is often difficult to express the depth of feeling verbally. When life's events are confusing, complex, and ambiguous, it is challenging to articulate events and relationships through verbal language.

Movies, TV and radio shows and commercials use background music and special lighting to evoke particular emotions. Billboards, films and TV use powerful images to convey important messages. Words are often kept to a minimum - allowing people to use the sights and sounds to make sense of the message.

The cerebral cortex spends the whole day filtering out information - we are all overloaded with facts, figures, and boring details. The doorway to the brain is through the limbic system and brain stem. If we can arouse interest in peace through telling stories that evoke an emotional response, then we are more likely to be able to penetrate through the filters in the neocortex and be heard and understood in a way that transforms the way people think about conflict, and their own empowerment to behave differently in the midst of conflict. The key to communicating about peacebuilding is how we can arouse these other two parts of our brain so that we can gain interest in our work from the third, rational part, the cerebral cortex.

8. THE MEDIA AND CREATING CRITICAL MASS FOR PEACE

Al Qaeda attacks around the world are carried out by small numbers of people, yet they have had a large impact on world events. Similarly, the last fifty years of conflict in Northern Ireland have largely been carried out by a few thousand people on both sides. Consequently, while violence can be caused by a few people, the presence of *peace requires the cooperation of many; a critical mass* of people, groups, institutions, and the media. In other words, it is far easier for a few people to burn down a house. It takes many people to build a house, just as it takes many to build peace. Building a culture of peace requires mass changes in the way people think, their attitudes, and their behaviors.

Malcolm Gladwell's book *The Tipping Point* describes the dynamics of reaching critical mass in each of these areas. Gladwell claims ideas, behaviors and new products move through a population in a similar way to viruses or contagious diseases. A cultural 'meme' is an idea that acts like a virus. *Tipping points* are the levels of critical mass where an idea, attitude or behavior catches on among the public and becomes dominant.

Malcolm claims new ideas, attitudes or behaviors come about when three factors exist. First, 'connectors' or people who interact in many different social networks need to adopt this new idea, attitude or behavior. Second, 'mavens' or information experts need to buy into a new idea, attitude or behavior. Third, charismatic sales agents with powerful negotiation skills need to engage in persuading people to take on a new idea, attitude or behavior.

What does all this have to do with conflict prevention and peacebuilding? The *Reflecting on Peace Project* compared four different approaches for bringing about social change.²³

1. The 'more-people' approach aims to engage large numbers of people to address an issue. Broad involvement of 'the people' is seen as necessary to change.
2. The 'key-people' approach involves certain important leaders or groups of people who are seen as opinion leaders and able to effect change in a situation.

3. The 'individual-level' approach seeks to change the attitudes, values, perceptions, or circumstances of individuals as an important first step to bringing about real and lasting social change.
4. The 'structural-level' approach more directly aims to change socio-political or institutional structures.

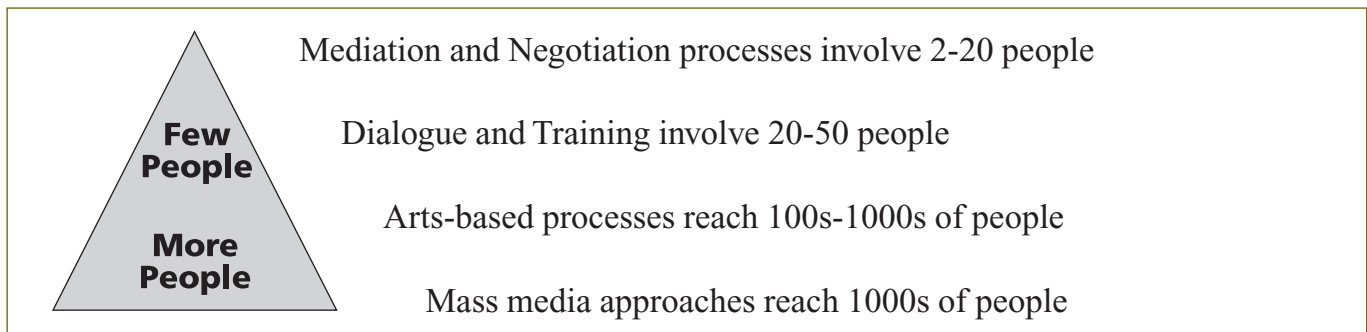
These researchers found that projects focusing on change at the individual level, such as dialogue programs, without translating into action at the structural level, such as policy advocacy, have little discernible effect on addressing the broader political or social issues they seek to change. In addition, the study found that approaches concentrating on including more people, but not necessarily key leaders or groups, did not constructively address social issues. Conversely, the research found that strategies focusing only on key people without including others were equally ineffective. If programs focus on one strategy only, they are unlikely to create social change. Programs that intentionally link individual with structural efforts, or include key people as well as more people are most likely to bring about change.

Given the complex ways these four types of approaches interact to bring about real change, it is easy to see that the media has an important role in reaching many people with a message of structural change. Including the media as one component along with a combination of different forms of peacebuilding strategies seems the most likely path to change.

Some types of peacebuilding projects aim to impact small numbers of people. Mediation and negotiation processes typically involve between 2-20 people to work on specific issues of mutual concern, sometimes to achieve jointly-defined development projects like school or health centers. Dialogue and training workshops often include 20-50 people at a time. These are important forms of peacebuilding, yet many

²³ Anderson, Mary B., Diana Chigas, Lara Olson and Peter Woodrow. 2004. *Reflecting on Peace Practice Handbook*. Massachusetts, USA: Collaborative for Development Action. Retrieved December 2007 from www.cdainc.com/cdawww/pdf/manual/reflectingonpeacepracticehandbook_Pdf.pdf

8. THE MEDIA AND CREATING CRITICAL MASS FOR PEACE



observers note that it is difficult to see a real impact when such small numbers of people are experiencing a transformation in the ways they think and behave in a conflict. In Israel-Palestine, for example, dialogue programs have endured repeated criticism for failing to translate into structural reforms.

However, the amount of behavioral and attitudinal change experienced by people exposed to these forms of peacebuilding projects is likely to be in inverse relation to the number of people reached. For example, a five

part dialogue program engaging members of different ethnic groups over a period of weeks or months is likely to make a bigger impact on participants than listening to a one-hour weekly soap opera for five weeks. More research is needed to know if this is true or not, but research on how people learn and change would indicate that processes that more fully involve people experientially (like dialogue) are more likely to make significant changes than the more passive involvement of listening to a radio program.

CONCLUSION



Television crew at the 2006 International Steering Group meeting in Nairobi, Kenya

Bringing about constructive change in a conflict is a challenge. Helping to change people's beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors requires in-depth knowledge about the conditions that enable people to make these changes.

The media's role in contributing to cognitive, attitudinal and behavioral change on a large scale is unique. Conflict prevention and peacebuilding professionals can use the media in harmony with their other programs - if they know when, why, and how to use the media for the most strategic impact in lessening the polarization between groups. On the other hand, media professionals still have much to learn about why and when their work can contribute to preventing violent conflict and building peace between groups. The media and peace professionals both have their limitations and share an interest in the dynamics of conflict.

Cooperation between agencies, donors, civil society, peacebuilding organizations and media practitioners is essential. There is a need for meetings, seminars and work groups where models and best practices can be shared. Because using media in peacebuilding is a new practice, everyone has a lot to learn from the exchange of experiences. A careful assessment of whether the media is likely to play a positive or negative role in achieving the goals of conflict prevention and peacebuilding requires greater insight into ways the media helps and harms the path toward constructive change. Both peacebuilding and media professionals still have a great deal to learn on this journey.

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THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR THE PREVENTION OF ARMED CONFLICT

The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) is building new international consensus and pursuing joint action to prevent violent conflict and promote peacebuilding, based on its *Regional Action Agendas* and the *Global Action Agenda*. GPPAC maintains a global multi-stakeholder network of organizations committed to act to prevent the escalation of conflict into destructive violence at national, regional and global levels.

The primary function of GPPAC is to promote and support the implementation of the *Regional Action Agendas* and the *Global Action Agenda*. For this purpose, GPPAC represents important regional concerns on the international level, enhances the functioning of the international systems for conflict prevention and uses its capacities to assist the implementation of key regional activities.

Sub-programs are:

Promote acceptance of the ideas of conflict prevention

GPPAC supports regional efforts to raise awareness regarding the effectiveness of conflict prevention, and undertakes parallel efforts at the global level.

Promote policies and structures for conflict prevention

GPPAC generates ideas for improving policies, structures and practices involving interaction among civil society organizations, governments, regional organizations, and UN agencies for joint action for conflict prevention.

Build national and regional capacity for prevention

GPPAC strives to enhance the capacity of its regional networks and global mechanisms to undertake collective actions to prevent violent conflict.

Generate and share knowledge

GPPAC engages in a process of knowledge generation and sharing, by learning from the experience of regions and developing mechanisms for regular communication/exchange of such information. GPPAC activities aim to improve our mutual understanding regarding important methodologies and mechanisms for action.

Mobilize civil society early response actions to prevent

GPPAC develops the capacity of civil society organizations to contribute to early warning systems and to intervene effectively in impending crises/conflicts. In response to regional requests, the global network will a) mobilize coordinated civil society responses, based on early warning of impending conflict escalation; and b) pressure governments, regional organizations, and the UN system to respond to early warning information.

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