

Lederach's "Pyramid of Actors,"⁴ which distinguishes top, middle-range, and grassroots leadership levels, is a significant tool for peacebuilding in the Philippines. Its context of clear sectors makes its relevance vast. Philippine peacebuilders work hard on the links between grassroots and middle sector actors in building a strong base for activism and change. However, the panelists also realized that it needs an expansion. The relationships and connections at the grassroots level are complex. What has emerged in the Philippines is a discussion of "the triangle within the triangle." To plan appropriately, one must realize the myriad relationships and connections that exist among the grassroots sectors.

Years of peace education programming in Philippine communities has created a rich environment for analysis and strategizing. Peacebuilders educated in similar locales, and committed to a building a culture of peace, have created a network of energized communities with a strong vision. They will continue to push the edges of peacebuilding.

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Peacebuilding in the Africa Great Lakes Region

The 1994 Rwanda genocide was an African problem in need of an African response. It was a complex humanitarian crisis involving thousands of refugees from Rwanda who were welcomed in both Goma in the North Kivu province of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and Bukavu in the South Kivu province of the DRC; the internal displacement of Congolese families; and unresolved historical grievances between different ethnic groups in Rwanda, Burundi, the DRC, and Uganda. Dynamics of nationality,

⁴ John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997), 39.

gender, sexism, power differentials, colonialism, structural and systemic violence, inequalities, class, militarization, organized crime, and plundering of national resources created the need for a regional conflict transformation program using an intersectionality-informed approach.

The Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) began a regional peacebuilding program in 1995 in Burundi and the DRC. In 1998, MCC volunteers from Eastern Congo and Burundi started a capacity-building program to support the Council of Protestant Churches of Rwanda. This training program focused on closing the gap between religion, conflict, and peace.

The key role played by the churches of Rwanda in orchestrating the killings of the innocent Tutsi and Hutus required the churches to be part of a long-term solution. The regional African churches and their partners were called upon to walk alongside the churches of Rwanda regardless of their actions. The Church of Christ in Congo in South Kivu province invited the MCC to initiate a joint peacebuilding program as a means to accompany the regional churches. This program started in 1996 and ran until 1999. It consisted of initiatives for transforming conflict, healing from trauma, humanitarian assistance, envisioning peace, restoring justice, and environment protection. After many years' absence, MCC returned to the region in 2014.

MCC used an intersectional approach in its response. This type of approach attends to the many intersecting dimensions of social identity—gender/sex, race, class, nationality, religion, sexuality, dis/ability, and age. No single identity is necessarily the key to interpreting how persons navigate and interpret their contexts, including contexts of conflict. Thinking proactively and creatively, MCC suggested to the Council of Churches and other stakeholders the creation of a non-church affiliated structure to be named The Council for Peace and Reconciliation (COPARE). Subsequently established in 1997, COPARE included stakeholders, both women and men, from these cohorts: faith-based, civil society, and business organizations; government; refugees from Rwanda and Burundi; internally displaced peoples; university, college and high school representatives; media; and others. COPARE used the intersectional approach in its peacebuilding program. Stakeholders interacted with, trusted, and learned from each other how race, ethnicity,

class, gender, age, disability and ability, nationality, citizenship, and religion create different experiences that may or may not contribute to building peace. They experienced transformation as they came together with their different identities and social locations.

The program brought together women from Rwanda, Eastern Congo, and Burundi who had suffered the consequences of war. They all participated in training in conflict transformation. From the resulting dialogue they realized a commonality of experience. The women had been traumatized. Even though their particular experiences varied, many of the symptoms were the same: inability to sleep; night terrors; and repulsion to certain smells, sounds, and tastes. Gender thus became the bridge across ethnic boundaries. The women began to talk together and help each other through their trauma.

In 1999, a Women's Symposium was held in Bukavu. Many of the women who had participated in the original training attended. They invited the military generals and politicians of all three countries to participate, and those from Eastern Congo and Rwanda accepted the invitation. During the exchange, both sides came to recognize the extent of trauma suffered by women during war and conflict. Recommendations were made for each group concerning future conversation, and for the need to establish a Women and Peace Network.

The program also looked at how nationality and religion intersect with conflict. Faith leaders from Eastern Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi were brought together to discuss the consequences of conflict within their regions. They discovered a commonality in the loss of church and school infrastructure; loss of budgets due to donor fatigue; and loss of membership as many people were displaced and became refugees. Because of the interethnic nature of the conflict, people often perceived that the church had sided with one or the other party. People in all three countries lost trust in the church leadership, who were seen as perpetrators of the conflict, having sided with "the enemy." The recommendation was to develop a peace synergy in the Great Lakes Region through pastor exchange and visitations between countries and regions.

As these and many other examples demonstrate, an intersectionally-informed analysis and approach has been a distinctive element of this Mennonite peacebuilding initiative.

Sustainability is a great challenge for peacebuilding in a region known for never-ending wars. This creates peace donor fatigue. When the media broadcast stories about conflict, then money flows to the area, but when these broadcasts stop so does the money. This makes it difficult to plan for long-lasting peace and sustainable development, and the cycles of conflict continue.

Another challenge that intersectionality work highlighted is the need to deal with perceptions of superiority and inferiority among participants, including clergy. People who came from different “levels” (high level, mid-level, grassroots level) had to find a way to connect and respect one another. In the end, they used the local metaphor “One finger cannot wash the face” to encourage connection and peace among the leadership.

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GI Rights Hotline: Expanding the Peacemaking Arena

In 1994 a group of agencies and individuals in the United States, who were providing counsel to active duty military personnel, gathered to form the GI Rights Hotline.⁵ The Hotline is a free phone counseling service that anyone in the military can call if they are seeking information about military regulations or practices related to difficulties they are experiencing. While the primary initiative for the Hotline came from agencies in the peace movement with years of experience in draft counseling, today’s counselors include a wide variety of people, including veterans, who are concerned about protecting the rights, health, and well-being of military personnel in the midst of a system that can be very dehumanizing.

I began participating in the Hotline as a counselor in 2001, while working as a peace educator for Mennonite Central Committee U.S. (MCC). One of my first calls came from a young soldier in Japan who had become a conscientious objector to war and was seeking a discharge based on her

⁵ For information, see www.girightshotline.org.