Imagine Peace: Connecting Global Solutions on Reconciliation with an Afghanistan Ready for Peace

By Ambassador Earl Anthony Wayne

Key Takeaways

▪ This report identifies best practices among reconciliation programs used in conflicts around the world that may help promote reconciliation in Afghanistan, should progress toward peace advance. A team of American University undergraduate researchers at the School of International Service worked under the guidance of former ambassador Earl Anthony Wayne to examine scores of programs in over 30 countries.

▪ The report draws on guidance from experienced scholars, leaders, and authoritative voices on Afghanistan, who assisted the team in selecting successful programs that could be useful in the Afghan context. The objective is for these examples to inspire Afghans and their partners to consider innovative avenues for reconciliation, should Afghanistan move toward a negotiated settlement and a process to consolidate peace.

▪ The research team identified four categories of promising reconciliation practices: Trauma Healing, Peace Education, Cohesion, and Gender Inclusivity.
Categories of Promising Reconciliation Practices

**Trauma Healing** includes programs that help victims and perpetrators to overcome resentment and reach common understanding. Truth and Reconciliation Commissions from around the world have combined storytelling with varying degrees of publicity to forge new national identities around shared trauma and to take power away from violent actors. Similarly, Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities workshops allowed victims and perpetrators of the Rwandan Genocide to join one another and work together for peace and development.

**Peace Education** includes programs that focus on preparing people for a future together through education. The Future Prowess Foundation in Maiduguri, Nigeria, educates at-risk children from all sectors of society by teaching them to learn, play, dream, and work toward better futures together. The Burundi Leadership Training Program focused on teaching the country’s leaders to listen to each other and collaborate. Colombian Peace Marketing used creative programs and mass media to convince militants to demobilize and to prepare their communities to accept them back.

**Cohesion** refers to programs that bring former opponents together for the sake of common goals. Mixed Soccer Leagues in post-Islamic State Iraq allowed Christians and Muslims to come together for the love of the game, learning to respect and even befriend one another along the way. In the same way, the UN’s Lake Chad Initiatives had people in frontier communities collaborate to design and implement security and economic initiatives to resolve common issues peacefully and effectively. Justice and Security Dialogues in Jos, Nigeria, encouraged constructive conversations between Nigerians around sexual assault and perceived police indifference, leading to corresponding improvements to existing law enforcement methods and structures.

**Gender Inclusivity** includes programs with an emphasis on promoting women’s rights and political participation. The strategy of localization has been used to successfully implement gender-inclusive conflict resolution in culture-specific ways through community-led discussions. Likewise, the National Summit of Women and Peace in Colombia contributed to an increase in women’s representation during the peace process and to the inclusion of gender-specific provisions in the resulting peace agreement.

The full report also includes several additional programs of interest in an annex. These programs hold promise, but the team was unable to gather enough evidence to be certain of their potential success or applicability.¹

Even if some of the programs identified were easier to implement than others, the research revealed several common threads among all successful measures. First, the programs were all carefully designed and implemented by dedicated teams, leaders, and communities. Second, they encouraged people to relate to one another based on common experiences. Third, they created or laid the groundwork for constructive dialogue between opposing sides. Fourth, they required a combination of local buy-in and international support to succeed. Fifth, teams and partners with substantial local and regional knowledge were key to ensuring that local needs and concerns were addressed. These five characteristics were vital to bringing about successful reconciliation in communities afflicted by violent conflict and will likely help promote success in Afghanistan.

¹. In researching for this report, the team focused on three additional cases: land reform policies in Liberia, the Fambul Tok community-building program in Sierra Leone, and militant reintegration in post-war Tajikistan. Each is an intriguing case of reconciliation which may be relevant to Afghanistan, but which had insufficient evidence to merit inclusion in this abbreviated report. The full report is available on request.
Trauma Healing

SOUTH AFRICA & SIERRA LEONE: TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION

Background & Program Description

Tasked with identifying wrongdoings by governments or non-state actors and resolving any remaining conflict, Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (TRCs) have been utilized across the globe to address the underlying drivers of longstanding conflicts and build the foundation for lasting peace. They have found success in a wide variety of conflicts due to their adaptable nature.

By collecting narratives from both victims and perpetrators of violence and broadcasting them to the affected individuals, TRCs seek to address past conflict and achieve institutional reform. South Africa collected around 22,000 statements while Sierra Leone collected 8,000 statements. Once narratives are collected, TRCs determine which ones to share publicly, and how to do so. In Sierra Leone, for example, public hearings were conducted in Freetown which allowed the stories of victims and perpetrators to be heard in a safe environment. A hallmark of TRCs is that they can be adapted based on the country, situation, or conflict; in South Africa, those who perpetrated violence could receive amnesty if they took part in the process, while in Sierra Leone, the TRC was legally bound to the country’s legislature. In both South Africa and Sierra Leone, the narratives helped foster a shared national identity by exploring violence against all parties.²

Evidence of Success

Evidence of TRCs’ success can be seen in South Africa’s transformation of an oppressive apartheid state into a multiparty democracy. Members of their Black community have said that the TRC helped reveal important truths and thus had a positive impact on South African society. Meanwhile, in Sierra Leone, the TRC pushed parliament to pass vital laws promoting women’s equality and pressured the government to form the National Commission for Social Action, which is designed to provide reparations and cash transfers to victims of apartheid practices and those in need.

Applicability to Afghanistan

TRCs are a viable option for Afghanistan, as they can be changed to accommodate the political and cultural situations of any host country. Afghanistan’s history of conflict resolution involves systems like the Pash-tunwali Code and Loya Jirgas; modified to include these indigenous practices, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission could prove a key model for a post-conflict Afghanistan. However, implementing a TRC with support from all sides will be difficult due to the length and brutality of the war. Although this cannot be ignored, a TRC designed and implemented by Afghans could help facilitate a peaceful post-war transition.

RWANDA: HEALING AND REBUILDING OUR COMMUNITIES

Background & Program Description

Healing and Rebuilding our Communities (HROC) is a community-level program developed to bring people from opposing sides of a conflict together to address the consequences of violence in their lives. Established in 2003 by Quaker groups in the United States, Rwanda, and Burundi, the goal was to create a program that would allow divided communities a chance to rebuild. HROCs have found success in a wide variety of conflicts due to their ability to bring opposing sides together, build trust, and reconnect

communities. If utilized properly in Afghanistan, HROCs should be able to bring warring communities together, build trust between opposing sides, and lay the framework for reconciliation.

The HROC program is locally based and comprised of 20 people, with half being survivors of violence and the other half being perpetrators. During the three-day workshop, the first day is concentrated on defining essential concepts, like trauma and reconciliation; HROCs work within their communities to identify the local equivalents for those concepts. The second day is focused on truth-telling and reconciliation between both groups. The final day focuses on rebuilding community bonds by having participants plan community-building projects and engage in local cultural celebrations. The entire process is overseen by facilitators who are trained in conflict transformation and program management, with limited interference during sharing sessions. A month after the workshop is complete, HROC trainers return to the community to check on its progress and train additional locals in reconciliation techniques.

**Evidence of Success**

HROCs have proven to be a trusted program in numerous communities. According to an HROC international organizer, as of 2017, the program had been used in at least 3,000 communities globally. Since HROCs are voluntary, this program growth demonstrates success among previously warring communities. It is vital that this is a voluntary program, both because it is conducted in parts of the world where missing a few days of work can financially hurt individuals and because the topics discussed can be traumatic. In Rwanda and Burundi, the programs started small, but found increased demand over time. Indeed, localities’ requests for the program to be conducted were so frequent that demand began to outpace supply. Furthermore, an HROC organizer says that test runs in both Kenya and the Democratic Republic of the Congo have expanded significantly, and that HROCs have been used in six sub-Saharan countries.

**Applicability to Afghanistan**

For peace to take root in Afghanistan, the trauma of everyday people should be addressed at the community level. Although Afghanistan has existing community reconciliation programs, like “Peace by Piece,” the HROC model is promising, having shown positive effects in individual communities around the world to promote local reconciliation.

**NIGERIA: PEACE EDUCATION, THE FUTURE PROWESS ISLAMIC FOUNDATION**

**Background & Program Description**

The first Future Prowess Islamic Foundation school was founded in 2007, with 36 pupils in Maiduguri, Nigeria—a city at the center of the Boko Haram insurgency. Its mission was to provide free education to children affected by the fighting. Today, the Foundation boasts two schools with a capacity of over 500 and a vocational training center for widows of war. The Foundation’s safety is credited to their “spectrum of allies,” meaning that widows and children of Boko Haram fighters, Nigerian security forces, and local traditional leaders all attend the school. As Boko Haram will not kill their own, the school is safer than anywhere else.

Various local leaders and widows whose children would be educated at the school were consulted when establishing the school; they identified issues like the need for healthcare, food, and uniforms, which the

---

The school employs “mass counselling” by traditional and religious leaders who encourage children to accept their pasts and dream of a better future. Moreover, students regularly bond through activities such as sports tournaments between mixed “houses” of students from diverse backgrounds. Finally, the school’s curriculum challenges children to understand complexity without discarding religion.

Evidence of Success

While in school, children are guided to adopt an identity as “Future Prowess Students” to transcend old resentments. Over 1,000 graduates have left the Foundation’s schools since 2007 and none have joined the conflict. Equally important, the school has never been attacked in its 13 years, despite two-thirds of its student body being female. Its continued operation and expansion are expensive, but it is supported by donors including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and the local Borno State Emergency Agency.

Applicability to Afghanistan

Afghanistan is home to millions of at-risk children without access to education, who are particularly vulnerable to recruitment by violent groups. Afghanistan also has a long Sufi tradition, emphasizing learning and tolerance, that might be leveraged in a peace education program for these children in a peace settlement context. In addition, an effort can be made to engage authority figures from all factions to inspire and encourage children to dream of a better future together, as is being done in the Future Prowess schools. With funding and support from various donors, schools modelled after Nigeria’s Future Prowess Islamic Foundation could give many Afghan children a renewed chance at life. If such programs prove effective, they could provide a model to prepare more of Afghanistan’s younger generations for peace.

BURUNDI: LEADERSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM

Background & Program Description

Burundi suffered from over thirty years of genocide, reprisals, and a civil war, before Tutsi and Hutu leaders were able to resolve their differences during the 2000–2008 peace process. In response, the Burundi Leadership Training Program (BLTP) was founded in 2002 by Howard Wolpe and Steve McDonald of the Woodrow Wilson Center, in an effort to help “diverse leaders from across the political and socio-economic spectrum to build their collaborative capacities” to aid Burundi’s planned transition from civil war to a stable democracy. Wolpe and McDonald asked two Burundians, former minister of human rights Eugene Nindorera and Fabien Nsengimana, to help manage the new local NGO. After three months of surveying Burundians for nominations, they chose 100 men and women to participate in the BLTP.

Half of the group was chosen from political classes, the Army, and rebel organizations, and half were civil society leaders from churches, women’s organizations, youth, and the business community, recognizing the difference between elites and common Burundians. These leaders were invited to workshops focused on skills like teambuilding, negotiation, effective communication, and strategic planning. The workshops were structured to build trust and encourage collaboration. The process used hands-on learning, with interactive exercises and simulations to help participants improve their leadership skills.

Imagine Peace: Connecting Global Solutions on Reconciliation with an Afghanistan Ready for Peace

Extensive funding from the World Bank’s “Post-Conflict Fund” and USAID allowed the program to continue over an 18-month period, with the promise that more funding from other European donors would be provided in the future. This guaranteed the sustainability of the project and time for Burundians to eventually take full ownership.

Evidence of Success

The program received an “enthusiastic reception” from the leaders of Burundi’s political parties, people who were seen at the time to “rarely agree on anything.” The BLTP’s good initial results in producing more confident leaders led to requests from Burundi’s political leadership, army, and law enforcement bodies to extend the program. In fact, in 2007, a “key leaders” BLTP workshop was held, involving all four living former presidents and leaders of the legislative branch, in order to resolve a constitutional dispute. Reviewing the BLTP in 2015, governance scholars Susanna Campbell and Peter Uvin stated that “BLTP workshops did effect a personal transformation in the way people perceive themselves in relation to other participants” and that “the BLTP provided a venue for decisionmakers to come together informally and relate relatively openly with one another.” Hundreds have been trained since the start of the program, with many Burundians training others. The BLTP has since become a stand-alone nongovernmental organization (NGO). According to Elizabeth McClintock, the then-lead facilitator for the BLTP, the program had success in the Burundian army, improving participants’ ability to analyze problems and their willingness to listen to each other.

Applicability to Afghanistan

Burundi, like Afghanistan, faced the need to create a government structure that could bring together divided groups. Training the leaders of tomorrow to accept one another and collaborate will help bring Afghanistan toward sustainable peace. In Burundi, an emphasis on local buy-in—achieved by identifying local leaders to participate through an inclusive polling process—made the program more legitimate. Existing programs in Afghanistan targeting rising political figures, such as the Afghanistan Young Leaders Initiative (AYLI), could provide a basis for using the framework provided by BLTP. Should negotiations between the Afghan government and the Taliban be successful, such a program could be valuable for supporting an inclusive government.

COLOMBIA: PEACE MARKETING

Background & Program Description

In 2006, advertising executive Jose Miguel Sokoloff was approached by the Colombian Ministry of Defense to develop a marketing campaign to persuade the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia—People’s Army (FARC) fighters to return from the jungle and to convince Colombia’s people to welcome them back into society. Sokoloff adopted a key guiding principle: that FARC insurgents were as much hostages to their organization as the victims they had terrorized. They feared rejection by their communities if they ever tried to demobilize and return home.

The team was able to reach these fighters effectively through their mothers. In 2013, 31 mothers agreed to provide childhood pictures of their sons and daughters along with written and recorded messages telling the fighters they would always be welcomed home. These were then distributed throughout the jungle. Their display of unconditional love and grace was a moving reminder to their children that they always had a community to return to if they gave up a life of violence.

Furthermore, timing and aesthetics were important. Sokoloff chose two key symbols for his campaigns: Christmas and soccer, Colombia’s national sport. Between 2006 and 2014, Christmas displays literally lit up the jungle to show FARC fighters the way out. During the 2011 U-20 World Cup, deflated soccer balls rained down on FARC territory from the skies, signed by fans, celebrities, and soccer players. Soldiers, politicians, former FARC commanders, schoolchildren, and local villagers all contributed to the campaigns, fulfilling Sokoloff’s vision: a coalition of Colombians asking fighters to come home.

Evidence of Success

This work has been credited with contributing to over 18,000 fighters coming home over a period of eight years. The projects were so effective that FARC leaders demanded that they be stopped as a condition for negotiations during the peace process. The 2013 Mother’s Voice campaign, for example, was tied directly to 218 fighters leaving the FARC. Other campaigns have been responsible for hundreds of fighters demobilizing, with peaks occurring consistently during the holiday season.

Applicability to Afghanistan

Though Colombia in 2006 was a different situation than Afghanistan today, similar ideas could be applied to the Afghan context. Afghanistan has cultural and communal resources from which to draw to promote reconciliation efforts. To succeed, such a campaign would need to be guided by professionals with an understanding of local geographies, cultures, norms, and regional nuances. Only Afghans have the power to convince their compatriots that they can be welcomed home.

Cohesion

IRAQ: MIXED SOCCER LEAGUES

Background & Program Description

In several conflict situations, sports programs have been used to overcome communal divisions. After Mosul’s liberation from the Islamic State in 2017, divisions between Muslims and Christians began to reappear; however, a well-documented effort using soccer to reconnect Muslims and Christians in post-the Islamic State Iraq found success.

The soccer leagues in Mosul were comprised of 51 teams, and each of the 51 was assigned three additional players. On some teams, the new players were Christians, while on others, they were Muslims. Inter-group contact had to be endorsed by respected community leaders to succeed. Moreover, it was important to be open about the goals of the effort; players were informed, for instance, that their teammates would be Muslims, and they had to pledge that they would keep all political activities off the field, but social integration was not promoted beyond the inclusion of the Muslim players. Lastly, the field provided optimal conditions to for intergroup contact—a cooperative context where Muslims and Christians were on the same team and had equal power status where no existing societal power dynamics were reinforced.

Evidence of Success

While inter-group contact did not radically shift “generalized tolerance” toward Muslims among Christians, it did have significant and lasting behavioral changes. In the teams with Muslim players, Christians proved more likely to sign up for mixed teams in the future, vote for a Muslim player on another team to receive a sportsmanship award, and train with Muslims six months after the end of the intervention. They

---

were are also more likely to believe coexistence with Muslims is possible, visit Muslim-owned restaurants, and even join Muslim holiday dinners during Ramadan. Though security and referees were on hand, serious arguments were uncommon, and when they occurred, they tended to be between members of the same group. Though some teams initially resisted accepting new players—particularly if they were Muslim—all 51 teams in the experimental leagues ultimately agreed to participate.

Applicability to Afghanistan

The project is currently being replicated in other places with relative ease and at low cost. Similar programs already exist within Afghanistan, such as “Skateistan,” which has been successful in teaching children to skateboard. USAID has been assisting municipalities to build local infrastructure, including soccer fields, in public-private partnerships through the Community Cohesion Initiative. As a short-term mechanism to improve inter-group behavior in the context of a peace settlement, this model could prove effective in Afghanistan if implemented in conjunction with local mosques, tribal elders, or respected NGOs. Though security concerns will need to be considered given the Islamic State and other groups’ propensity for attacking sporting events, sports like soccer and cricket bring Afghans together—regardless of creed or political affiliation.

Mali, Burkina Faso, & Niger: Regional Program Design in the Lake Chad Basin

Background & Program Description

Ongoing violence in the Lake Chad Basin, fueled by the Boko Haram insurgency, has left millions in dire need of humanitarian assistance. The United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (UN PBF) has been active in the region since 2014, implementing several cross-border initiatives in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, with a focus on regional cooperation. These initiatives have funded projects such as peace education camps, border security programs, and local business investment. Multiple parties are engaged in efforts to induce greater cross-border collaboration by strengthening security arrangements and reducing conflict over scarce natural resources. For example, cattle grazing grounds were identified as frequent sources of conflict; farmers in border communities were brought together to establish rules and practices in order to resolve such disputes peacefully. Additionally, local security forces were gathered to establish a common alert system that would strengthen border security.

Evidence of Success

The UN PBF’s approach was endorsed as a best practice by the UN Security Council in the UN Integrated Security Strategy for the Sahel. The early indicators are promising: between 2014 and 2018, 100 percent of local leaders involved in the UN PBF’s programs reported a positive effect on conflict resolution in the area. Furthermore, the program maintained gender-inclusivity in a region where it has traditionally been lacking: 42 percent of participants were women.

Applicability to Afghanistan

Over the past two decades, various militia and terrorist groups have exploited Afghanistan’s porous borders to continue operating despite immense military pressure. Afghanistan’s frontier regions have suffered tremendous violence. If successful negotiations occur between the Taliban and the Afghan government in Kabul, a coordinated response toward the Islamic State and other shared threats would aid in achieving a reduction in violence. Pashtun populations on both sides of the Durand Line could benefit from initiatives like the UN PBF’s in the Lake Chad Basin by encouraging greater coordination as they develop a strategy for joint self-defense and economic rehabilitation.
NEPAL, NIGERIA, BURKINA FASO, & IRAQ: JUSTICE AND SECURITY DIALOGUES

Background & Program Description

Justice and Security Dialogues (JSDs), developed by the U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP), bring key stakeholders in communities together to identify collective issues. Lasting approximately one year, JSDs are designed to allow communities to overcome their divisions by identifying shared issues, fostering understanding, and building relationships in a safe space. They are unique because they can be used in different contexts to build trust between civilians and security forces. JSDs were used to address sexual assault in Nigeria, help internally displaced people (IDPs) in Iraq, build police legitimacy in Nepal, and help unify disparate groups in Burkina Faso.

Evidence of Success

In the town of Jos, Nigeria, JSDs were conducted after the burning of a local police station. These dialogues led to the discovery that a shocking percent of sexual assaults were not reported due to the (legitimate) fear that the police were corrupt and untrained regarding sexual violence. As a result, local police created a specialized “gender desk.” In Iraq, the Islamic State drove many from their homes, sending IDPs throughout the country who were often excluded from their new communities due to pre-existing sectarian divides. JSDs built trust between the IDPs and locals, and some areas that had active JSDs saw up to a 75 percent decrease in violence. In post-war Nepal, JSDs allowed for police and non-state actors to expand police stations across the country, create interfaith committees, and establish multiple help desks for women and children. JSDs in Burkina Faso brought together police and vigilante groups, called the “Koglweogo,” to create a unified vision for how to achieve justice. This led to the creation of local crime-reporting community groups, theatre-based community dialogues, and publicly-available police training programs.

Applicability to Afghanistan

JSDs could effectively identify and resolve root causes of violence in Afghan communities. This model can be conducted within different contexts, provided they include various sectors of the community that are important to the conflict. According to USIP, they have worked in at least 12 countries. In Afghanistan, if presented through the language of pre-existing indigenous practices—like jirgas—and with the help of knowledgeable and influential local partners, methods pioneered by JSDs could be powerful tools to help Afghans talk to one another in the context of a peace accord, rather than turning to violence.

Gender Inclusivity

COLOMBIA: NATIONAL SUMMIT OF WOMEN AND PEACE

Background & Program Description

The war between the Colombian government and FARC displaced over 6,000,000 people and caused over 200,000 fatalities. As in many other conflicts, women were disproportionately impacted by trauma. However, contrary to many conflicts, Colombia’s peace process included a concerted effort to involve women and to center gender issues as a fundamental part of the negotiations. This inclusion was supported by several organizations, but one of the most notable initiatives was the National Summit of Women and Peace. Organized by grassroots civil society organizations (CSOs) in Colombia and supported by UN Women, the 2013 National Summit of Women and Peace was designed to create a visible platform for women’s inclusion. Over 400 women from almost every region of Colombia participated in broad discussions on the peace process, what peace would look like for them, and female security.
Evidence of Success

Two weeks after the Summit, the government and the FARC recognized the “important role of women in conflict-prevention, conflict-resolution, and peacebuilding.” The representation of women on the negotiation team increased to 20 percent by 2015, and 43 percent of FARC delegates were women. The peace talks also included the first-ever Gender Sub-Commission, designed to address gender-sensitive issues raised by the Summit’s attendees. **Tangible gains for women** in the peace agreements included provisions on property rights, a rebuke of amnesty for sexual violence committed during the conflict, and measures to decrease gender-based violence.

Applicability to Afghanistan

A program like the National Summit of Women and Peace, in the context of peace negotiations and a peace settlement, could prove beneficial to the overall peace process in Afghanistan in a variety of ways. Such a program could tap into the Afghan Women’s Network and its existing partnerships with CSOs, as well as use the tradition of the Loya Jirga, to create an institutionalized framework for gender discussions.

Though it may be difficult to convince the Taliban to accept such an event or related gender programming, the potential benefits of building channels for women’s inclusion into a peacebuilding and peace-sustaining process make such a serious effort worthwhile. A special jirga could be one such avenue.

UGANDA, THE PHILIPPINES, & NEPAL: LOCALIZATION

Background & Program Description

A key component of facilitating culturally-sensitive and feasible gender-inclusive policies and programs involves working with local community leaders. This is critical in cultural contexts that have a history of gender-based discrimination and where women are facing significant challenges. The Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GWNP) has created a strategy called “localization,” which emphasizes culturally-specific implementations of UNSCR 1325 and the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda based on a local understanding of gender inclusivity. Localization workshops are designed to identify actions needed to implement and promote coordination across international, national, and local communities, including harmonizing National Action Plans (NAPs) with community-level policies.14

By bringing together key community stakeholders representing government, religious, women, and youth interests, the GWNP’s localization strategy works to pinpoint pre-existing NAPs on gender inclusion and to reconcile them with community interests and norms. To begin, workshops are held with stakeholders to introduce the concept of gender equality, WPS, UNSCR 1325, and what these concepts mean in the local context. Next, groups develop local policies that work to incorporate these concepts at the community level. Lastly, a “training of trainers” is held to help distribute localization guidelines to the rest of the country. **The program has four key learning objectives:** raise local awareness of the WPS agenda; promote a sense of local ownership of the WPS agenda; foster cooperation across local, national, and international governing bodies; and contribute to implementation of the WPS agenda globally. Currently, GNWP has implemented this strategy in over a dozen countries.

Evidence of Success

The promise of the localization strategy can be seen in Uganda, the Philippines, and Nepal. As a result of local action plans developed in the targeted workshops, there has been increased reporting and better

---

responses to sexual and gender-based violence in Uganda and the Philippines, and an increase in women running in local elections in Nepal. Additionally, in Nepal, the WPS agenda has been integrated into the school curriculum and training programs for the police and the army. A 2014 monitoring report of Nepal indicated increased awareness of the WPS and more women in leadership positions.

Applicability to Afghanistan

Localization—or a similar program that convenes community leaders—could prove useful in Afghanistan, as it involves a community-led discussion of “women and peace” issues while considering cultural context and working to create local ownership. Afghanistan has a National Action Plan, developed in 2015, that localization workshops could refer to. Localization also allows local leadership to identify what steps are needed, thereby creating a sense of legitimacy. While some of the specific workshop logistics of localization may not be feasible in a peace agreement with the Taliban, the concept of community-level discussions regarding what gender-inclusive peace looks like, as well as the development of specific local-level actions that work toward that goal, would assist with increasing legitimacy of the resulting peace agreement. By utilizing existing networks of Afghan women’s organizations, national government policies, support from international partners, and promising inroads with the Taliban regarding women’s rights, there may be space for community-level discussions on gender inclusion.

Lessons Learned and Opportunities for Afghanistan

The programs presented here have had success in helping former opponents to live together. Ideally, some of them can inspire frameworks for reconciliation in the context of an Afghan peace process. The research revealed several common threads between successful reconciliation efforts:

- They required careful nurturing to take root and flourish. They would not have been successful without the dedicated leaders, teams, and communities behind their implementation.

- They encouraged people to relate to one another, focusing on experiences of conflict, common symbolism (e.g., mothers, holidays, sports, etc.), and joint identities.

- They created or laid the groundwork for spaces where people from opposing sides could engage in constructive dialogue.

- They depended on a combination of local buy-in and international support. Local willingness to participate and contribute were equally important as funding, recognition, and training from international actors—if not more so.

- They all depended on teams and partners with vast regional knowledge to modify core ideas into nuanced initiatives sensitive to local needs and concerns.

These five characteristics appear crucial to bringing about successful reconciliation in communities suffering after violent conflict. Reconciliation will be an arduous process in Afghanistan, as it has been elsewhere, but learning from successes can help the mending needed to consolidate peace. As the Afghan people hopefully move toward peace, the authors sincerely hope that the examples identified in this report will prove helpful to policymakers, international donors, and local leaders as they set about the critical tasks to build and sustain peace.
Ambassador Earl Anthony Wayne is a senior advisor with the Project on Prosperity and Development at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington, D.C.

Ambassador Wayne would like to thank Danielle Budd, Anna Hirsch, Maria Humayun, Katie Kerekos, Peri Kirkpatrick, William Mosko, Joseph Pesmen, and Kevin Reckamp for their extensive research, excellent conceptual contributions, and outstanding drafting that made this report possible.

This report is made possible by general support to CSIS. No direct sponsorship contributed to this report.

This report is produced by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), a private, tax-exempt institution focusing on international public policy issues. Its research is nonpartisan and nonproprietary. CSIS does not take specific policy positions. Accordingly, all views, positions, and conclusions expressed in this publication should be understood to be solely those of the author(s).

© 2020 by the Center for Strategic and International Studies. All rights reserved.