Has Peacebuilding Made a Difference in Kosovo?

A Study of the Effectiveness of Peacebuilding in Preventing Violence: Lessons Learned from the March 2004 Riots in Kosovo

Executive Summary

CDA Collaborative Learning Projects

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Foreward

The violence that shook Kosovo in March 2004 came as a blow to the people of Kosovo, and, especially to the international community. After nearly five years of significant investment in a variety of economic, social and cultural initiatives aimed at bridging the gap separating the different ethnic groups, the events of March 2004 were a sad reminder of the urgent need to assess critically whether such interventions were contributing towards the goal of building a peaceful, multi-ethnic society in Kosovo. This was particularly important for those specifically *peacebuilding* initiatives which focused on promoting conflict management and resolution through dialogue and mediation, as well as through the implementation of a diversity of development interventions in ethnically mixed areas.

CARE International viewed the March 2004 events as an opportunity to assess whether its peacebuilding work was in fact making a difference, as there was some evidence that a number of communities engaged in its programmes had either resisted or experienced little violence. Given the relevance of such a study for future peacebuilding programming in Kosovo, it soon became evident that this exercise could not limit itself to reviewing CARE's programmes but that it should include the peacebuilding work carried out by a number of local and international NGOs, as well as by municipal governments and some international organisations. Broadening the scope of the study was a means of obtaining more reliable, and therefore, more useful results for all those undertaking some form of peacebuilding work in Kosovo and hopefully elsewhere.

A successful combination of efforts by a number of organisations made this research possible. CARE International invited the Collaborative for Development Action (CDA) to undertake the study. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the United Kingdom generously offered to fund a substantial part of its cost. CARE UK, CARE Austria, as well as CDA also contributed funds to the study.

Although the research findings cannot be considered conclusive, as they are necessarily based on a small sample of interventions in Kosovo, they do provide extremely valuable insights into the impact of peacebuilding initiatives that we cannot afford to ignore. Thus, the report indicates that important achievements obtained through dialogue and training in dispelling certain fears and breaking down stereotypes and 'enemy images' remain at the level of individuals and are not adding up by involving larger groups of individuals, communities and key organisations or by creating broader networks that could contribute more effectively to reducing tension and generating meaningful forms of inter-ethnic cooperation. The assumption that the implementation of ethnically mixed initiatives will bridge political divisions, diminish feelings of hatred and fear, and will facilitate acceptance of the "Other" is not materialising. This is due, among other reasons, because 'multi-ethnicity' is widely perceived as a 'conditionality' imposed by the international community, and because these initiatives are not addressing the issues

that continue to divide and confront Kosovo along ethnic lines such as war crimes, missing persons, justice, impunity, security and property titles. With the partial exception of the latter, these admittedly sensitive issues are not being considered by most peacebuilding initiatives in a systematic way, perhaps because they demand a long-term and progressive approach that cannot be accommodated within the typically short life of projects which, moreover, are expected to demonstrate concrete, and at times immediate, results. The requirement of *quick-impact* peacebuilding interventions rather than gradual *time-healing* processes that allow for the sustainable resolution of ethnic antagonisms explains at least in part why 'multi-ethnicity' has not been internalised as a positive value by all ethnic groups and why they largely regard it as a component of an internationally-driven agenda. It is hard but valuable lessons such as these that make the CDA research report so relevant for rethinking and adjusting peacebuilding programming in Kosovo with a view to enhancing its impact. The report also enables us to envisage the immense challenges that will continue to haunt Kosovo after the resolution of its political status.

CARE International Kosovo is pleased to share this research report on *Has Peacebuilding Made a Difference?* We are convinced that it will greatly help the work of all those committed to achieving a lasting peace in Kosovo.

CARE International Kosovo

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The violence of March 2004 prompted many agencies to reflect on their peacebuilding programming throughout Kosovo. What had gone wrong? Could they have done better? Some communities escaped the violence. This study was commissioned by CARE International, with other NGOs, and funded by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, CARE UK, CARE Austria, and CDA Collaborative Learning Projects' *Reflecting on Peace Practice* project. It looks at what went right in those communities, and what lessons can be learned from those experiences to improve the effectiveness of peacebuilding programming in preventing violence in the future. What factors enabled communities to avoid or resist inter-ethnic violence? To what extent did peacebuilding work contribute to these factors?

The study was conducted in three phases. Between January and May, 2005, we conducted a desk study and several consultative workshops with NGOs and other agencies in Kosovo to analyse patterns of violence from 2002 onward. The results informed our selection and conduct of field-based, rich narrative case studies from June – November 2005 in seven communities, interviewing about 200 people individually about their community's experience with inter-ethnic violence and peacebuilding. In the final phase, we analysed the cases collaboratively in several consultative workshops in Kosovo, Washington and Boston with NGOs, donors, international agencies and issue experts. The findings reflect what we have heard from a wide range of people in these communities and the international and governmental organisations and NGOs, about what has enabled them to avoid or resist violence, or, in cases where there was violence, what happened and why.

The study produced several major findings regarding the prevention of inter-ethnic violence in communities and the possible roles and contributions of peacebuilding programming.

Perceptions of improvements in inter-ethnic violence (IEV) from 2002 – 2004 masked a reality of a steady level of inter-ethnic violence during that time. Rather than improving, IEV had shifted in nature and visibility over time, from direct inter-ethnic intimidation and assaults to more indirect forms of intimidation and pressure, such as property-related crime, vandalism and theft. Many people discounted the significance of these kinds of property crimes, because the motivations were not purely ethnic. Indicators of improved inter-ethnic contact and movement by minorities – K-Serbs moving in private cars and without escorts, going more frequently to cities and towns, interacting with K-Albanians in multi-ethnic markets – did not reflect improvements in the underlying situation.

Contrary to expectation, places with greater inter-ethnic contact – whether in the form of business/economic ties or personal relationships – did not experience less violence. On the contrary, many communities considered "good" in 2003-2004 in terms of inter-ethnic relations, from Fushë Kosovë/Kosovo Polje to Gjilan/Gnjilane, experienced some of the worst violence in March 2004, despite efforts by individuals, often at great personal risk, to protect their neighbours. The evidence suggests that inter-ethnic contact in these communities remained at the individual level and did not produce "bridging social capital," or inter-ethnic networks of engagement, that could restrain politicians' efforts to polarise communities, and create mechanisms for communication and rumor or crisis control.

Intra-ethnic social networks (or 'bonding social capital') were more important than inter-ethnic engagement in preventing violence. Communities that avoided violence in March 2004 experienced no influx of 'newcomers' and were generally able to bridge intra-community political divides. As a result, intra-ethnic social networks remained intact and strong, and were a significant resource for dissemination of information and mobilisation of collective action. Where communities had access to relatively reliable information about the other's intentions and the situation, leaders anticipated the arrival of violence in their communities and took action to interrupt the cycle of action-reaction. These communities were able to draw on the bonding social capital to take and implement collective decisions in the community to refrain from action that would provoke violent reactions. However, while this bonding social capital was a significant resource for preventing violence in Kosovo, it was (and is) also used to prevent cooperation and preserve tension. In the absence of powerful strategic motivations for avoiding violence—such as the need to demonstrate fulfillment of the Standards for Kosovo in order to gain independence—bonding social capital could in the future be used to mobilise violence.

Peacebuilding programming did not contribute significantly to prevention of inter-ethnic violence. Peacebuilding programming has had some important, if modest, effects on inter-ethnic relations in Kosovo, especially on the people who have directly participated. However, the evidence points to several ways in which peacebuilding programming has missed the mark and could be more effective than it has been.

1. *Missing the mark? Failure to transform individual ties into networks of civic engagement*. The neglible role of inter-ethnic "bridging" social capital in preventing IEV is due, in part, to the failure of efforts to build (or rebuild) cross-ethnic ties and cooperation to transform individual ties into *networks* of civic engagement that connect people across ethnic lines, built trust and facilitate communication and cooperation on issues of public concern.[1] Peacebuilding programming fell short of its potential in three areas:

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[1] *See* Ashutosh Varshney, "Ethnic Conflict and Civil Society," *World Politics* 53 (April 2001), pp. 362-98.

Ø The programmes often did not move beyond the entry point for inter-ethnic contact, in terms of deepening or expanding initial experiences of inter-ethnic interaction. Funding for "soft" programming was limited, and often withdrawn or redirected once initial successes were achieved, limiting the depth and scope of inter-ethnic engagement. At the same time, while some programmes were sustained, there was considerable duplication of kinds of interaction, leading some local NGOs to reflect that interest in their programmes had dropped off because the programmes had nothing new to add.

Ø Peacebuilding through economic cooperation tended also to mirror existing, implicit "rules of the game" for inter-ethnic interaction amongst K-Albanians and K-Serbs, which permitted interaction for economic, but not social or political purposes. Therefore they added little to the existing quality of interaction.

Ø Finally, peacebuilding programmes often worked *around* issues of intra-community resistance to inter-ethnic contact and rapprochement – providing space, protection, logistics and a cover for people to meet. They did not, however, work *on* intra-community IEV perpetrated because of pressure not to engage with people across ethnic lines. Consequently, they did not address the forces keeping political and social space for rapprochement closed.

2. Missing the mark? Programmes did not address key driving factors of conflict. The focus on returns and democracy-building as the core of peacebuilding overlooked critical issues affecting the relationship between K-Serbs and K-Albanians. Although the violence in March 2004 was attributed by many to the poor state of the economy, community members consistently mentioned missing persons and war crimes (K-Albanians) and security, justice and failure to prosecute perpetrators of IEV when asked about obstacles to peace. Horizontal inequalities between K-Albanians and K-Serbs also seem to have played a role. K-Albanians resented K-Serbs taking "double salaries" and receiving what was perceived as disproportionate support from Belgrade and the international community, while their own economic progress was stymied by the lack of resolution of the question of the political status of Kosovo. K-Serbs feared and resented property-related IEV that deprived them of housing and livelihoods. Their dependence mostly on social institutions financed by Belgrade for employment also has been an engine in the growth of radicals. In this sense, frustration and anger about the economy go hand in hand with political frustration.

Yet few (if any) programmes addressed these key issues even indirectly. In some cases, programme participants signed formal memoranda that they would not discuss politics. In many programmes in which K-Albanians and K-Serbs worked well together, no effort was made to talk about the conflict or the issues communities themselves identified as obstacles to peace. Central-level programmes for institutional development, especially in the justice, police and local government sector are, of course, designed to lay the

institutional foundations for dealing with these factors. However, at the community level, these programmes have not significantly affected the conflict dynamic. Both K-Serbs and K-Albanians believed that their main fears and concerns – especially issues related to freedom of movement and punishment of war crimes – were not being addressed adequately. Poor communication between communities and police and justice providers reinforced this feeling and increased fear, resentment and hostility between K-Serbs and K-Albanians.

3. *Missing the Mark? The focus on multi-ethnicity and returns as the core of peacebuilding increased divisions rather than improving relations.* The emphasis on returns and aid to returning IDPs or refugees inadvertently worsened divisions between K-Serbs and K-Albanians. Resentment developed amongst K-Albanians as they perceived that resources and attention had been dedicated to K-Serbs—their former oppressors—at the expense of the needs of the majority population. The practice of providing balancing grants did not significantly alleviate this feeling. At the same time, policies of promoting "multi-ethnicity" through providing rewards and incentives for cross-ethnic contact and activities did not yield hoped-for results. While many people did in fact come together and work together on needed infrastructure and economic projects, the emphasis on multi-ethnicity was perceived in communities not as a "carrot" or reward for cooperation, but as a "conditionality" that was (and is) widely resented. Communities developed ways to circumvent the spirit of multi-ethnicity, either through *pro forma* multi-ethnicity in projects or by imposing conditions for agreeing to multi-ethnic cooperation. Peacebuilding programming exacerbated these unintended consequences by rewarding form and not following up on or monitoring substance. This created a great degree of cynicism about multi-ethnicity and opportunism, rather than increased trust, interdependence and information sharing.

4. *Missing the mark? Programmes did not engage many key people and areas.* A significant proportion of programmes identified in this study focused on women, youth and returnees and their receiving communities. This is partly because women and youth are considered natural bridge-builders or focused on the future. Yet youth and women's programming did not support their potential to become key positive forces for peacebuilding in a hostile and polarised environment. There was also little focus on the "hard to reach"[2] – less moderate people and people and groups that are "key" to success in the peace process. These constituencies, especially those who might undermine any potential agreement (such as KLA and war veterans, the Serbian Orthodox Church, less moderate Serbian parties in Kosovo), have only recently begun to receive some attention. Participant selection processes requiring that applicants exhibit tolerance and a willingness to live together reinforced the tendency to engage the easiest to reach. As a result youth programming seldom reached youth that were likely to or did participate in violence. At the same time, their teachers and principals, who played a role in the March

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[2] See Mary Anderson and Lara Olson, *Confronting War* (Cambridge, MA: Collaborative for Development Action, 2003), p. 59.

2004 riots, were rarely targeted in peace programming. Even when they were, it was not in relation to their role vis-à-vis the driving factors of conflict.

Finally, there is a question about the geographical targets of programming. Areas that were most affected by the war and largely mono-ethnic now (e.g., Drenica) are reported to be more extreme politically, especially with regard to the status of Kosovo. Residents from these areas are reported to have traveled to participate, and in some cases lead, the violence in March 2004. Yet these areas did not receive the same levels of assistance as more mixed areas. Nor were they included significantly in inter-ethnic peacebuilding efforts. Similarly, "Belgrade" was mentioned as key to the evolution of the situation and of inter-ethnic relations in Kosovo, yet aside from high-level talks and working groups, there was little cross-border or coordinated programming with Serbia.

Conclusions and Recommendations. As the status negotiations proceed, the temptation is strong to assume that provisions in the agreement on decentralisation, cultural heritage, minority rights, and property, along with democratisation and economic development, will build the peace. To be sure, it will provide a more stable political framework within which K-Serb—K-Albanian, and more generally minority-majority, relations can develop. Yet this study suggests these will not be sufficient to build communities' ability to withstand the pressure of future shocks or crises that will inevitably arise in the implementation of any agreement. In order to strengthen the effectiveness of peacebuilding programming, action is recommended in the following areas:

- *Shift focus of peacebuilding programming.* Questions raised by communities in this study about the desirability or feasibility of "multi-ethnicity" as it has been promoted in Kosovo, as well as the effectiveness of promotion of inter-ethnic cooperation, should prompt us to rethink the focus of peacebuilding programming on refugee and IDP returns and "multi-ethnicity," even while maintaining the pursuit of democracy and European standards as a strong goal. As decentralisation and returns policies are formulated, and questions of how to delineate municipal structured or permit returns to places other than the original place of residence are considered, the fact that concentrations of K-Serbs have been less vulnerable to inter-ethnic violence than more dispersed populations should be taken into account.

- *Deal directly with driving forces of conflict.* Effectiveness could be enhanced if programming were targeted to deal more directly with the driving forces of conflict. Agencies working in different sectors and at all levels of society could identify ways to deal more directly with political issues in their work. This would enhance the impact of work on the degree of inter-ethnic tension, in the medium term, if not in the short term.

- *Rethink targeting of areas and beneficiaries of programming.* Focus not on targeting the more moderate people – the "easy to reach" – but on facilitating their evolution into a peace constituency, while simultaneously addressing the "hard to reach." The process of selecting of partners, participants and beneficiaries could focus on identifying and

supporting "innovators" and "early adopters" who will take public action for peace, as well as people who exercise informal leadership and authority in communities. Simultaneously, greater steps could be taken to engage with key people and mono-ethnic areas more systematically, especially KLA veterans and war victims, K-Serb political and community leaders, less moderate K-Albanian organisations such as "Vetevendosje" and the Serbian Orthodox Church.

- *Transform individual ties into networks of inter-ethnic engagement that can proactively resist violence.* The events of March 2004 suggest that there is a critical mass of young people that can be mobilised for violence by those interested in undermining dialogue and compromise. A strategy is needed for turning individual ties into meaningful "bridging social capital" that could provide a counterforce. In this context, it is important that donors and implementing agencies invest in follow-up and linkages between programmes. Funding for "soft" elements of programmes should be expanded and sustained over longer periods of time, and greater coordination and collaboration encouraged. "Single identity" work should also be supported, not just as a preparatory step to inter-ethnic interaction, but as a follow-up process to deal with intra-ethnic resistance to engagement.

- *Work with intra-ethnic networks on conflict issues.* In the short- to medium-term, "bonding social capital" – the intra-ethnic networks of trust and reciprocity – are likely to be more important than inter-ethnic relations in preventing and mitigating violence, especially in rural areas. In urban areas, support for development of networks across political and "newcomer to the community"vs "old resident" lines of cleavage could help stem the disintegration of these communities' capacity for collective action in times of crisis; fostering dialogue and civic engagement across these lines on issues of community development and issues such as inter-ethnic cooperation, property issues and other drivers of conflict would be an important area of activity. At the same time, strengthening of mechanisms that provide accurate information about the "other" (whether they operate within or across ethnic lines) would enhance chances of decisions against violence. With the Standards for Kosovo and resolution of the question of status operating as a weaker source of motivation, another set of incentives will need to replace them. These could be associated with European integration, but in order to be effective, will require clear consequences for failure to meet standards of behavior.

The violence that occurred March 17-18, 2004 was unique in many ways, a response to a particular set of circumstances at a particular time, and should not be the only benchmark for assessing peacebuilding in Kosovo. As status negotiations proceed, many of the politico-strategic reasons for violence are likely to disappear or evolve. Yet as K-Serbs and K-Albanians struggle to find ways to coexist, the experiences of communities that avoided violence in March 2004 can offer us relevant lessons regarding effective peacebuilding policy and practice.

Kosovo Municipalities: Serbian & Albanian

Serb spelling above
Albanian spelling below
One name if same in both languages
Dotted line is former boundary of Malisevo

Serb Communities in Kosovo, from Matveeva, Anna and Wolf-Christian Paes, *The Kosovo Serbs: an ethnic minority between collaboration and defiance* (Friedrich Naumann Foundation and Saferworld, 2003).

List of Abbreviations

CCK	Coordination Centre for Kosovo (Serbian Government agency)
CDA	CDA Collaborative Learning Projects
CivPol	United Nations Civilian Police
EU	European Union
HDI	Human Development Index
ICG	International Crisis Group
IEV	Inter-ethnic violence
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IGO	Inter-governmental organisation
INGO	International non-governmental organization
KFOR	Kosovo Force
KLA	Kosovo Liberation Army (also known as UCK)
KPC	Kosovo Protection Corps (also known as TMK)
KPS	Kosovo Police Service
K-Albanian	Kosovo Albanian community
K-Serb	Kosovo Serb community
LDK	*Lidhja Demokratike e Kosoves* (Democratic League of Kosovo), formerly headed by Ibrahim Rugova, currently headed by Kosovo President Fatmir Sedjiu
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
OSCE-KVM	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe – Kosovo Verification Mission (deployed prior to 1999)
PDK	*Partia Demokratikee Kosoves* (Democratic Party of Kosovo), headed by Hashim Thaqi
PISG	Provisional Institutions of Self Government
RAE	Roma, Ashkali, Egyptian

Has peacebuilding made a difference in Kosovo?

SNC	Serbian National Council
SRSG	Special Representative of the Secretary-General (United Nations)
TMK	Trupat Mbrojtëse të Kosovës, or Kosovo Protection Corps
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNMIK	United Nations Mission in Kosovo