16.
Media and Ethnopolitical Conflict

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“Society is like an ecosystem that needs variety to maintain itself. When one ‘species’ is exterminated or suppressed, others will multiply too fast at the expense of some others. Thus, diversity will decrease, the complexity of the system will diminish and it will all become less defensible against erosion.”

Hamelink, 1988

The world has entered an era of rapid change. Dramatic population movements and increasingly dynamic human interaction through the technological revolutions in computers, travel, and telecommunications have begun to erode traditional cultures and ways of living, thus making it more and more difficult for both individuals and groups to define and redefine themselves (Barber, 1996).

In this uncertain and increasingly complex world where the only constant is change, many groups and leaders around the world have turned to ethnicity as the answer to their dilemmas of identity. As many of these newly identified ethnic groups live in the same states, inter-ethnic conflict has become a mainstay of the Post-Cold War era. Newspaper headlines around the world are filled with news of different ethnic groups reacting violently to
perceived threats both from other groups and the aforementioned population and technological changes, that is, threats to their identities. Indeed, there are currently 233 politically active groups in 93 countries engaged in political or military struggles as a result of which more than 20 million refugees are in flight (Manoff, 1998:11).

The causes of this eruption of ethno-political conflicts are numerous. ‘Structural factors,’ including economic, social, and political issues relating to wealth distribution and inter-ethnic relations, ‘facilitating factors,’ including the degree of politicisation and ethnic consciousness, and ‘triggering factors,’ including sharp economic shocks, inter-group tension and the collapse of central authority are generally argued to be the main causes of ethnic conflicts (Costy & Gilbert, 1998:12). Media play a central role in the negotiation of the structural factors, as well as the creation of the facilitating factors and triggering factors that lead up to a violent conflict. As argued by Cees Hamelink (1997:32), national or ethnic propagandists through the media can “suggest to their audiences that ‘the others’ pose fundamental threats to security and well-being of the society and that the only effective means of escaping this threat, is the elimination of this great danger.” The German media, for example, played a central role in shaping the image of the ‘other’, i.e. the Jewish people, into an evil figure that had to be exterminated (Goldhagen, 1996:9). More recently, the private Radio Television Libre Des Mille Collines in Rwanda has played a major part in triggering the conflict by broadcasting messages like “You cockroaches must know you are made of flesh. We won’t let you kill. We will kill you,” a few days before the genocide in that country (http://www.ejc.nl/mn/showresultnews.hmx?4867). Unfortunately,
the world today abounds in many other examples of the media contributing to the escalation of violent conflicts as a result of sensationalistic reporting.

Before going into the proposed actions for the positive potentials of the media in conflict transformation, the perception that journalists are ‘neutral’ or they are supposed to remain ‘neutral’ must be overcome. In reality, as argued by Van de Veen too (1999), the issue is not about taking sides in reporting conflict since journalists are already a third-party in any conflict they are covering. Thus, the media and consequently journalists are inherently non-neutral: simply by being there and reporting about a conflict, they alter the communication environment. Furthermore, the way in which journalists report a certain conflict can drastically affect the audience’s perception of the conflict and thus possibly its direction and eventual outcome.

Thus, we will first argue (Negative Potentials of the Media in Conflict Transformation) that what journalists perceive to be a ‘neutral’ position is actually ‘taking the side of their nation/ethnic group’. Once this point is established, we argue for a more ethical journalism or even an ‘intended outcome’ peace programming, in order to counterbalance/reverse/heal the damage done (Positive Potentials of the Media in Conflict Transformation).

**Negative Potentials of the Media in Conflict Transformation**

International and inter-ethnic relations news coverage stands out as two of the main areas where the aforementioned partiality of journalists favouring their home nation/ethnic group is particularly noticeable. Research about comparative international news, for example, confirms the significant role of the media in perpetuating
a worldview that consistently favours the home nation/ethnic group perspective on world affairs. In their coverage of international and national events, the media continually produce and reinforce certain socially shared ethnic prejudices (Carrier, 1997; Rivenburgh, 1995; Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1985). Since a prejudice forms in an oppositional relation with the 'other', the media often make use of certain 'oppositional metaphors' in constructing these prejudices.

It is not our intention here to endeavour to an exhaustive discussion about nationalist and racist attitudes of the media, since an extensive literature already exists on this topic (e.g. Bonnafous, 1991; Hartmann & Husband, 1974; Jager & Link, 1993; Van Dijk, 1991, 1997; Wilson & Gutierrez, 1985). It is useful at this stage, however, to review some of the main ‘oppositional metaphors’ used by the media in conflict areas.

**Oppositional Metaphors**

“Us” with the great old civilisation vs. “Them” with their historical backwardness;

“Our” tolerance vs. “Their” nationalistic exaltation;

“Us” the modern civilised society vs. “Them” the uncivilised savages;

“Us” the giving/accepting host vs. “Their” receiving/frightening minority in “Our” country (Terzis, 2001)

Some examples of the above from the Greek Press [regarding the Greek-Turkish conflict] include: (El. 2/10): “The Turks even today behave according to primitive instincts, like a few centuries ago ... when masses of their blood-lust conquerors knocked on the gates of Europe ... And how does the civilised West react to the
disobedient towards the international laws and agreements barbarian Asiatics?” Furthermore, the law that was pass in Turkey for the obligatory flag decoration of public buildings, [which is a permanent reality in Greece!], is treated ironically by the whole Greek press: “Flag-mania in Turkey” (N. 26/10), “Exaltation with the half moon” (E.T. 26/10). Concerning the aspirations of Turkey to join the EU the national Greek press writes: “The political-military establishment may have put on a European cloak, but this country still conceals within it deep remnants of authoritarianism which pass on ‘by the grace of God’ to all forms of power (...) The Turkish state has not as yet shown the necessary respect towards its citizens, so that it can be included in the society of the dignified countries” (N. 19/7) (www.greekhelsinki.gr).

These ‘oppositional metaphors’ abound in the media of conflict-ridden countries all over the world and often present themselves in the national media’s coverage of internal and external issues as ‘threats’ facing the nation. In the case of conflict between two countries for example, often the ethnic minorities of the ‘other’ in the country are identified as the official representatives of the external ‘enemy’ regardless of the weakness of the ties between them. While everyday discrimination against them is hardly ever covered in the media, the few cases of crime committed by ethnic minorities becomes the central evidence of the ‘ungrateful ethnic criminal’ image drawn. They are also often perceived as a threat to the social well-being and national security and their contribution to the economic, political and cultural diversity are rarely mentioned (Van Dijk, 1999).

These discursive strategies present the ‘Other/enemy’ as a homogeneous, internally undifferentiated entity intending to deprive ‘Our’ country of her identity and territory. Equating
(through dissimulation) the representations of the ‘Other’s’ citizens, political forces, government and Diaspora with ultra nationalists is a commonly used strategy. The political field is thus simplified into two opposing forces, ‘Us’ vs. ‘Other’, ‘good’ vs. ‘evil’, ‘moral’ vs. ‘immoral’. Hence the perception of the human rights of political, ethnic and religious minorities is that they are secondary to the ‘national rights’. Political, ethnic, and religious minorities are treated as a threat in the media text, or worse as traitors, and their perceived anti-nationalist action is criminalized (Sofos & Tsagarousianou, 1993).

The reasons for the (re)production of these ‘oppositional metaphors’ and hate speech in the media can be found in every stage of the general media production cycle or ‘basic social determinants of journalism’ (McNair, 1998:14):

**Constraints of Journalists Reporting Conflict**

1. Professional culture (e.g. absence of journalism code of ethics, professional ideology that sees journalism as a necessary tool to defend the ‘national interests of our country and preserve our cultural autonomy, poor training of the media personnel and absence [or lack of enforcement] of media laws),

2. Organisational constraints (e.g. deadline pressures that a lot of times do not allow in-depth/balanced reporting),

3. Technical constraints and possibilities (e.g. lack of equipment, limited and/or biased newsgathering techniques),

4. Political pressures (e.g. censorship, traitor labelling, intimidation, lobbying, regulation, the interlocking interests of the media, the politicians and the business sector),

5. Economic pressures (e.g. destroyed market conditions, fierce unregulated commercialisation, market forces that promote sensational journalism),
6. Source tactics and strategies (e.g. intimidation of the journalist by the government sources, public relations/conflict spin doctors).

(Adapted from Ozgunes & Terzis, 2000)

Hence, every level of these ‘social determinants of journalism’ in conflict-ridden areas potentially plays a negative role in the coverage of inter-ethnic relations.

**Positive Potential of the Media in Conflict Transformation**

Having established the media’s negative potential for reinforcing prejudices that exacerbate the oppositional relations with the ‘other’, we would like to argue for a more ethical journalism and a pro-peace media that can play a key role in conflict prevention and transformation.

Cultural autonomy and preservation of national identity in the present changing world does not mean fanatic nationalism or ethnocentrism and closing down of all the channels of communication. On the contrary, as Fanon argues, “the consciousness of self is not the closing of a door to communication. Philosophic thought teaches us, on the contrary, that [communication] is the guarantee” (Quoted in Hamelink, 1983).

Thus, our efforts should be focused on enhancing the pluralism of the media environment of the countries in conflict and keeping the doors to communication open. Minimal pluralism of the media suppresses the emergence of new cultural movements amongst which are peace and rapprochement movements.
Necessary Steps in Media-Project Planning

Unfortunately, there is no ‘magic-recipe’ for implementing a successful media project for positive conflict transformation since no two ethnopolitical conflicts are the same. But there are three basic steps that every related project should take:

**Step 1: Two Dimensional Pre-Project Assessment**

The mission of the two dimensional Pre-Project Assessment is to find out if the conflict is appropriate for a media-based intervention for conflict transformation, and if so, what kind. The answers to the following questions are crucial in providing guidance for finding the market-niche for making a difference and consequently in shaping the right communication strategy (media-mix) in the case of a positive atmosphere for a Peace Media Project:

### Objectives of the Conflict Assessment

- History/Time-line of the conflict: Pre-War, War, Post-War
- Which are the international players involved?
- What is the current level of ethnic, political and economic tensions?
- What is the current state of the militaries, political and religious authorities and economies of the opposing sites?
- Top-down: what are the positions of the political elites of the opposing sides? are there any negotiations (Track One) going on at the moment? If so, are there secret, closed-door or open?
- Bottom-up: What are the views of the peoples on the various sides of the conflict? What do they perceive the reasons, resolution and desirable solution to be? What are their needs of security, identity and development? Is there a grass roots peace movement (Track Two)?
- Middle-out: Is there sufficient communication between political elites and the people? Between Track One and Track Two diplomacy?
Would the political bodies and civil society encourage the entry of a Peace Media Project into the media environment(s)?

How can the Peace Media project avoid being perceived as a top-down, foreign-imposed solution?

What are the possibilities for grassroots community involvement in such project?

Objectives of the Media Assessment

- Which communication avenues are available?
- Who owns/controls them?
- What are the audience ratings for different media and what is level of access - media penetration of different media?
- How does gender and social class affect access to the media?
- Which sources are trusted by the society?
- How does the inter-media agenda setting work in the countries involved? Which media are considered prestigious enough and set the agenda for the others?
- What is the legal framework in which the media in the country operate?
- What is the journalists’ ‘professional culture’?
- What is the strength of the professional unions of journalists?
- What is the economic framework that the local media work?
- What is the approach of the different media outlets to the conflict?
- What is the level of public, media and media-broker diplomacy?
- What are the logistical/time-frame, material/technical, and human resource requirements in the country(ies) in conflict for establishing a Peace Media initiative?

Goals of the Assessment

- Do we need to do training? To whom? What kind?
- Do we need to establish new media or can we work with existing ones?
- Do we need to create partnerships between local and international media?
• Do we need to distribute hardware to the local media and the population and what kind?
• What will the specific content of these productions be?
• What will the outlet be?
• Which one of the different media and genres formats will be appropriate to achieve the ‘intended outcome’?
• What will be the method of production and who will produce it?
• What will be the appropriate time for implementing it?
• How would we maintain balance between the opposing parties?
• How can we assure the sustainability (commercial or voluntary) of the project?
• What is the ‘opportunity cost’? In other words, what other project for the positive transformation of the conflict we could do with the same effort and money?

Fundamental in this two-dimensional assessment is designing the questions for each dimension according to the local variables. Such a case-specific approach would allow the implemented strategies to vary widely according to the nature of the conflict, the cultural geography of the field and the local mediascape.

**Step 2: Project Design & Implementation**

We will divide the types of Media Peace Projects in three categories: Training, Provision of Hardware and Media Content.

(a) Training

There are three main categories of people that we could possibly need to conduct training for:

• Media Technical Staff (printing, recording, editing, sound, maintenance, etc);

• Judges, Lawyers, Civil Servants (Press Law issues: freedom of speech, censorship, diversity; International Conventions protecting journalists, assisting in changing restrictive media laws, etc), and;
• Journalists and journalism students can be trained on:
  • safety instructions,
  • standard journalism skills,
  • media management,
  • human rights and ethnic minorities reporting,
  • health-emergency or humanitarian reporting,
  • web based and non-mainstream source reporting,
  • standard conflict resolution theory,
  • conflict analysis reporting, and,
  • media and media-broker diplomacy.

[All the above can be extended for grassroots peace movements who would like to use media for peace oriented programming in workshops, community radio, television or press.]

Projects that aim for the following goals (through conferences, professional exchanges, training workshops, and joint productions) can contribute substantially to media’s positive role in conflict transformation. (Please see example of training curriculum for journalists reporting ethnopolitical conflict for a joint training between opposing sites in the following Box):

**Training Programme for a Journalists’ Workshop on Reporting Ethnopolitical Conflict**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day/unit one:</th>
<th>Introduction to the literature on media and conflict (Research on why and how the media have a negative effect. How can they have a positive effect in conflict transformation?).</th>
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<tr>
<td>Day/unit two:</td>
<td>Case studies of reporting from other areas of ethnopolitical conflict. Case studies from home.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Day/unit three:</td>
<td>Writing in the shoes of the ‘other’ (How do we think that the ‘other’ thinks about ‘us’?).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Day/unit four:</td>
<td>Standard conflict resolution training and conflict analysis reporting.</td>
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<td>Day/unit five:</td>
<td>Jointly reporting the past (Scratch the historical wounds and revitalise memories of co-existence; try to understand the ‘other’s’ memories, and attempt to create a joint ‘interpretation’ of history.).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Day/unit six:</td>
<td>Jointly reporting present divisive issues.</td>
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<td>Day/unit seven:</td>
<td>Jointly reporting current areas of (possible) cooperation.</td>
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<td>Day/unit seven:</td>
<td>Exercise 2020; jointly imagine and report the future (year 2020) of the opposite parties (future problems and future solutions).</td>
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As argued also by Manoff (1998), “there is ample evidence that objective, fair, accurate and timely journalism is an effective way to help prevent or manage conflicts.” Manoff points out to media’s potential to create a common basis in conflict transformation through the activities it undertakes such as building confidence, counteracting misperceptions, identifying the interests underlying the issues, and building a consensus.

Siebert (1998) contemplates on the same issue and points out to similar ‘potential’ roles of the media in conflict situations such as: acting as a medium of communication between conflicting parties, generating options to violent conflict, reflecting the ordinary person’s desire and need for peace, communicating the process of negotiations to the constituencies involved, securing a free flow of accurate and constructive information, playing a watchdog role to help ensure long-term accountability from leaders to the people and providing a forum for on-going dialogue.
Goals of Projects Targeting Journalists

- Journalists and consequently their audience should learn more about the position of the ‘other’, discuss them in public, and eventually report more about the political and social realities of the ‘other’;

- Journalists should have more permanent contact with journalists from the other side. Annual joint Workshops, exchanges of news and feature items, internships in the ‘others’ media, internet communication and a journalists’ networks are possible channels for the creation of this type of fora;

- Using skills from conflict analysis theory, journalists must take a more in-depth and analytical reporting approach to the conflict;

- The journalists of the opposing sides must utilise sources outside of the official ones so that alternative concepts, frameworks, perspectives, and interpretations to the military worldview are heard;

- Journalists should avoid presenting certain views or actions as belonging to a whole ethnic group and portray their subjects as individuals, as government representatives, or as a specific interest group (Ozgunes & Terzis, 2000).

(b) Projects Targeting Media Content

As it has already been mentioned in the first step there are different media and genres formats available to carry out the media content:

Different Media and Genres Formats Appropriate for a Peace Media Project

- Drama Series (Television & Radio);
- Documentary Series (Television & Radio);
- Magazine Show (Television & Radio);
- Roundtable Talk Show (Television & Radio);
- Peace Song (Television & Radio);
- Inter-Ethnic Team Reporting (Newspapers, Television & Radio);
- Video Dialogue;
The conflict situation and the state of the local mediascape will determine which one (or combination) of those media and genres is more appropriate. The mission of the media content could be an expression by ANC leader Andrew Masondo: “Understand the differences; act on the commonalties.” In general, the media content for constructive communication in breaking the cyclical nature prevalent in ethnic conflicts should be guided by three general principles.

First of all, the people of the groups in conflict need to mentally revisit those moments in history when wounds to self-respect occurred. The perception of losses in ethnic conflicts is generally so painful in terms of lives, territory, justice and integrity that time, on its own, does not offer much healing. Healing and reconciliation of past conflicts depend on a process of transactional contrition and forgiveness between the ‘historical enemies’. This process proves to be indispensable to the establishment of a new relationship based on mutual acceptance and reasonable trust. Media content that offers joint analysis of the history of the conflicts, and the recognition of injustices and the resulting historic wounds are fundamental parts of this process. Media’s potential to reach and influence large numbers of individuals puts it in a position to
become a central actor in this process of reconciliation (Ozgunes & Terzis, 2000).

Second of all, the media content should promote identities other than ethnicity. Once the groups in conflict manage to heal the wounds of their historical differences, they should then attempt to build trans-ethnic identities. Such identities can assist them in finding common ground and developing ties based on common interests. The media again have a potential positive role to play in this process. Media content that reveals different aspects of the societies in conflict, such as individual aspiration and achievements, common environmental problems, business prospects, or disaster relief, can contribute significantly to the creation and strengthening of alternative identities. As Sofos (1997:269) argues, the peaceful coexistence of groups in conflict requires a radical transformation of the public spheres that would enable alternative social identities and solidarities to be negotiated and forged, which in turn would contribute to the flourishing of non-ethnic notions of citizenship. For this to materialise, the positive role of the media proves to be vital.

Finally third, a sense of security and the faith of the people in human kinship must be re-established. Such faith could create a moral system of obligations among strangers that have the capacity to come into force when all other social relations capable of saving a person have been destroyed. The boundaries of our moral universe that have usually been limited to the borders of our tribe, language, religion, or nation need to be extended for the peaceful co-existence of groups in conflict. This extension through the human kinship empathy and networking should be one more of the philosophical lines that drive our efforts for media
programming that promotes the positive potentials for conflict transformation (Ignatieff, pp. 4, 20).

(c) Provision of Media Hardware
Because of the disruption to the media infrastructure and/or the malfunctioning of the media in areas of conflict the provision of media hardware is increasingly been recognised as an important area of humanitarian assistance.

1. Financial and technical support to local print and broadcast media to re-establish themselves: It is usually preferable to support and strengthen existing local media, but this assumes their editorial independence and ability to reach the affected population.

2. The most common strategy, in case that the former conditions do not exist, it is to set up a new radio transmission facility (which usually presupposes the co-operation of the local authorities. Recent technical developments have made for FM broadcasting low budget and simple to use. The total cost of a complete radio broadcasting package (digital recording, editing and transmission within a 30 km radius) can be under $15,000. Special considerations should be taken for: a) a technical survey and mapping the possible geographical sites for establishing low cost FM transmitters, b) considerations should be given to power sources (DFID, p. 37-38).

Other media hardware provisions include:

3. Building radio and TV studios;
4. Distributing radios and batteries or solar radios to the local population;
5. Donating newspaper paper and printing machines;
6. Donating computers and free access to internet;
7. Setting up internet portals for exchange of information and chat rooms for exchanges of opinion;
8. Donating mobile phones when absolutely necessary for the communication of the journalists;
9. Subsidising newspaper supplements;
10. Subsidising the printing of training materials, and;
11. Providing office equipment.

Overall considerations should be taken to accompany hardware with appropriate training, maintain balance of support between opposing parties and avoid to disrupt the local media market with long term subsidies and out-of-context high salaries (DFID, p. 38).

**Common Ground’s Projects in ‘Media and Conflict Transformation’**

**Angola**

The Centre for Common Ground in Angola has been working since 1996 to build a strong constituency for conflict prevention and reconciliation activities. CCG began with dialogue facilitation and consensus building, and training Angolans in conflict resolution skills using various media and materials. In April 1997, the Centre completed the recording of the Angolan Peace Song, with the help of thirty-five of the most popular Angolan musicians from diverse political backgrounds. CCG has also recently produced twelve TV documentaries about Angolans making a difference in their community. Each video is being aired on national television.

**BiH**

Since the implementation of the Dayton Accords the European Centre for Common Ground has been working to reduce ethnic tensions and to promote a collaborative approach to the development of the country. ECCG started working in Bosnia in 1996, with the production of Resolutions Radio and Radio Zena. These weekly radio programmes tackled topics from politics and economy, to cultural and women’s issues, trying to build consensus on contentious problems. Moving on to television programming, ECCG produced a four-part series entitled Mimo Vas, presenting an intimate look at the lives and concerns of ordinary people throughout the country. The series paid particular attention to successful efforts to rebuild the nation’s economy, politics, and society.
**Burundi**

Responding to the rise of hate radio and the need for balanced, reliable information, Studio Ijambo (Kirundi for “wise words”) was established as the first independent radio studio in Burundi in 1995. The purpose of the studio is to produce quality programmes through fostering dialogue and co-operation between Hutu and Tutsi journalists. Objectivity and thoroughness have given Studio Ijambo a reputation for credible reporting. In 1998, Studio Ijambo won the first place in the 2nd Annual ECHO (European Community Humanitarian Office) Television and Radio Awards.

**Greek-Turkish Co-Operation**

As a response to longstanding tensions between Greece and Turkey, ECG has developed a project, which emphasises work with the media to facilitate cross-cultural understanding and collaboration. This two year-programme includes training in conflict resolution skills for journalists, twinning of university journalism departments, editorial exchanges and joint-media projects (radio and television documentaries), facilitating meetings between media owners/executives.

**Liberia**

Inspired by the successful experience of Studio Ijambo in Burundi, Talking Drum Studio in Liberia has been producing programmes since 1997, with the overall goal of reducing political and ethnic violence by stressing the themes of peace, reconciliation and reconstruction. In the past two years, the studio has attained nearly 90% listenership among Liberians in and around Monrovia. As another significant proof of its success, in 1998, Talking Drum Studio in Liberia won the second place in the 2nd Annual ECHO TV and Radio Awards.

**FYROMacedonia**

ECCG has been working in FYROMacedonia since 1994 to transform potentially violent and destabilising conflict among the country’s diverse ethno-linguistic groups into inter-ethnic co-operation and collaborative projects in the areas of media, education, and the environment. Through this multi-pronged approach the organisation strives to build a culture of inter-ethnic understanding and peaceful conflict resolution.

Over the years, ECGC carried out numerous media projects including five inter-ethnic reporting projects and the production of a series entitled Path to Agreement, which covered contentious issues from the points of view of all ethnic groups. Presently, ECGC
is producing the children’s conflict resolution television series entitled Nashe Maalo (Our Neighbourhood). The show targets 7 to 11-year olds and is aimed at strengthening inter-ethnic co-operation among future generations of Macedonians.

**Sierra Leone**

ECCG in co-operation with Common Ground Productions will draw upon its experience in Liberia and Burundi to use radio to address the most pressing issues facing Sierra Leoneans. It will also allow for a sub-regional approach to the conflict by building upon the success of its operations in Liberia. The overall goal of this radio project is to reduce violence by stressing the themes of peace, reconciliation and democratisation in the sub-region.

**South Africa**

Search for Common Ground produced a series of 13 half-hour TV programmes that explore how people and governments manage to resolve conflicts around Africa. In order to widen the impact of the series, it is being broadcast not only in South Africa, but also across the whole African continent.

(d) Holistic/Multi-Level Approach

Finally, efforts to realise the positive potentials of the media must be the part of a concerted action to shift the political culture in which the media operate. Experience in the field of media and conflict transformation proves that efforts limited only to the media often fail to address the ‘structural’ factors that gave rise to the conflict in the first place. Thus, in our design and implementation, efforts to transform the individual and societal mentalities should be extended to include governmental and non-governmental organisations, political leaders, businesses (including media owners), public opinion leaders, teachers and academics, and marginalized sections of the society. It is through this multi-level approach that a conflict can eventually be transformed since these bodies constitute the umbrella under which media can formulate
the specific content of their programmes and activities (Ozgunes & Terzis, 2000).

**Step 3: Post-Project Assessment**

This is the last step of programme development that allows the organisation to determine whether their programs are furthering the cause of peace. Assessing the impact of programs can be as simple as documenting informal audience feedback following the radio broadcast or other activity, or creative measures of listener feedback such as a call for opinions delivered to a mobile unit in a central location. But it can also involve structured interviews and/or discussions with members of the target audience, surveys or other forms of elaborate data collection. The point is to identify ways to measure achievement of objectives (how does the audience appropriates the messages?). The benefit of predetermining a methodology for assessment is that it will contribute to more conscientious program development and to the establishment of a system of documentation.

The information generated by program assessment serves multiple purposes. For this type of projects, however, the short-term objectives of assessment are to provide feedback on progress towards program and activity objectives and to feed information forward into future program decisions. This latter purpose aids continuity of programs and the progression towards long-term organisational objectives. It might, for example, uncover the need to reformulate program objectives, change a format, or alter/add a target audience. The documentation of audience feedback should serve as a rich source of ideas for immediate or deferred program development.
The assessment process should also serve as an opportunity to verify whether or not conflict resolution strategies are guiding programming. Producers can ask themselves how their program, for example, reduced stress for the audience, or how it modelled co-operative strategies. Finally, complementary to the outside evaluation programs, mechanisms for in-house evaluation should be established in order to provide continuity and decrease the cost of the assessment.

**Conclusion**

In our conclusion we would like to refer to certain identified risks or risky assumptions which are the usual causes of peace media project failure:

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<tr>
<th>Risks and Risky Assumptions or the Most Common Reasons that We Fail</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Ability to research information sources of at-risk populations;</td>
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<td>• Willingness of credible local and/or international media to disseminate humanitarian and other peace related information;</td>
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<td>• Availability of qualified technical assistance;</td>
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<td>• Viability of partnerships with local NGOs and CBOs;</td>
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<td>• Appreciation by the funders of the value of media-based peace projects;</td>
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<td>• Recognition by funders and local leaders that quality, as well as diversity of media output, is critical in rebuilding civil society;</td>
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<td>• Existence of rapid broadcasting deployment units in areas of disaster;</td>
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<td>• Bureaucratic restrictions/pressure to media personnel (visas, frequencies, taxation, employment restrictions, etc);</td>
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<td>• Loss of equipment;</td>
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<td>• Change of media ownership during the times of conflict;</td>
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<td>• Misunderstanding of the culture and the context of the conflict, as well as the genuine priority needs of the people;</td>
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</table>
• Pre-project assessment delays the programming;
• Finding reliable local journalists and setting up editorial checking systems in local languages;
• Striking the right balance of editorial guidance: too much editorial control can be resented by local journalists, too little can lead to inaccuracies or boring programmes and publications;
• Difficulties in establishing editorial freedom;
• The message is perceived by the local population in a positive way;
• Verifying the impact with measurable indicators;
• Ability to tackle deep rooted structural inequalities only with media based projects;
• Tough competition results in the failure of non-commercial media, and in a media environment where the only sources of information are the state media;
• Airtime charges are too high for NGOs to access local radio and television with pro-social broadcasts;
• Increasingly fragmented audiences mean greater difficulty in reaching a 'critical mass' through a mass media channel;
• Equal access to the media personnel positions by different gender, social class and ethnic groups;
• Equal media penetration to different gender, social class and ethnic groups;
• Unproductive competition for funding between NGOs;
• Being perceived as an agent (US or Russian or other spy), and;
• Blindly doublicating projects from one region to another without considering the local context.

(DFID, pp. 11-28)

Finally we should also address the question and possible dilemma of implementing media-projects in conflict-ridden areas, whether outside forces are at all, and if so under what conditions, legitimised to intervene in the media landscape of a country/region in conflict. What gives us the 'right' to be there? Are we the
new ‘white angels of mercy’? Are we exporting/imposing our own
value-system while implementing the project? Are we funder
driven? Can we really make a difference? Are there cases that our
intervention will make the situation worst?

The answer to these questions is usually provided first by the pre-
project assessment (and it has to be reassessed during the design
and implementation of the project, as well as during the final
phase of the post-project impact evaluation). Do we have the right
means to address the problems of the conflict through the media?
What is the stage of the conflict? Can a media intervention, during
the negotiations for example, endanger their positive outcome?
And finally, and perhaps most importantly, what is the state of
national media landscape(s) and communication environment in
general and how we involve the local media and grassroots peace
movements in the process? Because our ideology should be
participatory and in every stage of the project (pre-project
assessment, design implementation, and post-project assessment)
we should have the participation of the locals as the only compass
that legitimises our presence and can successfully produce the
positive potentials of media in conflict transformation. Last but not
least, what ‘justifies’ our Peace Media Project in the areas of
conflict is the introduction in our Project Design of an ‘exit strategy’
for handling over the project to local community groups or
professional organisations and the implementation of this strategy.

References

Books.

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