

# The search for conflict resolution

*Lessons drawn from a  
community development strategy*

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## Introduction

Since 1996, I have published a number of pamphlets and a book<sup>1</sup> which either detailed or drew heavily upon the community development/conflict resolution process introduced into the former Soviet Republic of Moldova (following the outbreak of civil war between Moldova and its breakaway region of Transdniestria) by a Belfast-based project, MICOM, under its Director, Joe Camplisson.

Over the years Camplisson's expertise continues to be regularly sought by community activists and conflict resolution practitioners in different conflict areas of the world. In September 2003, for example, he was asked to design and facilitate a workshop for a group of young Israelis and Palestinians, and a pilot programme is currently being developed to determine whether aspects of the Moldovan modalities can be replicated in the Middle East.

I have worked as a community activist in Belfast for over 30 years, and while I am constantly heartened and sustained by the energy, capability and creativity which exists at community level I am also only too aware of the sense of helplessness which can prevail among many communities when confronted by life-threatening inter-communal conflict. It was in an effort to provide something of a practical nature to all those individuals and groups – in whatever part of the world they might be – endeavouring to address the effects and causes of identity-related violent conflict that I decided to present the essential elements of the community development/conflict resolution process – as utilised in Moldova and elsewhere – in a concise format, augmented by a further distillation in the form of 'guidelines' – drawn, as far as possible, from actual practice.

The hope is that the lessons and guidelines presented here will not only be found stimulating, even challenging, by conflict resolution practitioners and those in the scholarly community, but, equally importantly, will prove valuable to those at the grassroots who are engaged in self-help attempts at conflict resolution because the very survival of their communities necessitates such a course of action.

**Michael Hall**

<sup>1</sup> *From Conflict Containment to Resolution*, Island Publications, 2002. ISBN 1 899510 37 0

# Part 1

## *Community development and conflict resolution: theory and practice*

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### Initiation

Joe Camplisson had been initiated into ‘community action’ when the West Belfast housing estate where he lived found itself at the interface of inter-communal violence in 1969. He left his job as a TV repairman and devoted himself to building links between the estranged communities. Later that same year, in recognition of this work, he became the first fieldworker appointed by the Northern Ireland Community Relations Commission (NICRC), set up under the chairmanship of Dr Maurice Hayes. The NICRC sought to employ a community development strategy to deal with the increasing levels of inter-communal violence and disaffection between government and governed. Through his work for the Commission, and the training in community development he received from Hywell Griffiths – Director of the NICRC and Visiting Professor, Queen’s University, Belfast – Camplisson had come to accept community development as something which could not only assist local communities address real needs through self-help action but could also become a strategy for wider systemic change.

The NICRC had also called upon the services of John Wear Burton, a leading world specialist in conflict resolution, who based his practice on what he called ‘Basic Human Needs Theory’. Working as his assistant, Camplisson was impressed by Burton’s demonstrations of his approach: in particular, when he introduced a top paramilitary leader (from the Official IRA) and some of his associates into a ‘problem-solving’ process, examining their own and their enemy’s positions. This process helped reveal that: the conflict they and their adversaries were engaged in had an identity-related dimension; adherence to the military option was a self-defeating strategy; they had a problem to be solved rather than an enemy to be destroyed. Burton believed that *assisted analysis*, the quintessential element in this problem-solving process, could bring adversaries to a ‘win-win’ outcome which would satisfy their respective identity needs.

To Camplisson here was a new language which challenged the standard approach which had dominated the field of conflict resolution up to then – that of mediated negotiations with its reliance on confrontational, adversarial, power bargaining. The new way of thinking which Burton’s form of assisted analysis

induced into the participants (including facilitators) most likely made sense to that paramilitary leader as he subsequently helped lead his organisation into a unilateral ceasefire declaration in May 1972. Camplissson had no doubt of the important contribution made by Burton to that outcome.

## **Requests for assistance from Moldova**

When the world was alerted to the appalling plight of Romanian orphans – following the downfall of the Ceausescu regime in 1989 – many people in Northern Ireland responded by sending money and material aid. Because of their direct experience of the Troubles, however, some community activists in Belfast felt that sending money and material was not always the most appropriate response and a community-based specialist team, of which Camplissson was a part, was sent to Romania to investigate community needs on the ground.

While in Romania Camplissson received a request to facilitate a similar self-assessment of needs in neighbouring Moldova, which in August 1991 had declared its independence from the Soviet Union and was experiencing identity-related tensions between its Romanian-speaking majority and the non-Romanian-speaking minorities, who were ethnically Slavs. By the time Camplissson travelled to Moldova fighting had already erupted between Moldovan government forces and militias from a breakaway region to the east of the River Dniester – Transdnistria.

Camplissson saw at first hand many of the acute problems which had either arisen from, or had been exacerbated by, the conflict. To facilitate an analysis of these problems he helped to organise a conference, involving 60 participants, in the neutral venue of Nitra, in the former Czechoslovakia. Although Camplissson's community development strategy could embrace the need for conflict resolution, at this stage he was concerned with assisting in the development of effective self-help socio-economic processes and infrastructures, with only minor attention given to either the causes of the conflict or its resolution.

The conflict, however, could not be ignored, and he soon acceded to another request – to do what he could to help bring about peace. It seemed an impossible task. Camplissson, following meetings at the conflict interface with different levels of Moldovan and Transdnistrian leadership, discovered that although there was a desire for a resolution of the conflict, even among army and militia commanders, there was at the same time an inability to do anything which could help to move things towards such a goal. He realised that the reluctance to take any independent initiative arose from a fear that such action might not be condoned by those at higher leadership levels. To address this problem, therefore, he sought and received an official request for assistance from the new leader of the breakaway Transdnistria, President Smirnov, thereby averting perceived dangers and removing fear at lower levels of leadership. The following year he received a similar endorsement from the Moldovan leader, President Snegur.

## Two complementary strands

Two distinct but complementary strands were now emerging within Camplisson's response to the various requests made of him. A second conference at Nitra consolidated the community development work which was engaging people at the grassroots on both sides of the conflict interface. Secondly, as a direct consequence of the requests he had received to assist in bringing about peace, the community development strategy was now directed at conflict resolution, in a process which had gained the active involvement of the political leaderships.

In July 1992 a ceasefire had been negotiated and international peacekeeping troops deployed to monitor it (these are still in place today). When the CSCE set up a peace mission in April 1993 the Moldovan and Transdniestrian authorities established 'Expert Groups' who would represent the two sides in CSCE mediated negotiations. It was agreed that these same Expert Groups would engage with Camplisson.

The challenge was how to involve the Expert Groups in a conflict resolution process which would be compatible with the CSCE mediated negotiation process. The process of negotiation would endeavour to bring the two parties to accept a compromise political settlement. The conflict resolution process, however, was based on analysis, and would use the 'Transdniestrian issue' to push that analysis, not towards a political compromise, but towards an identification of the root causes of the conflict. Each process, therefore, had the potential to frustrate the other. Camplisson also realised that a conflict resolution process engaging the political leaderships would require a different approach from that used at Nitra:

In a conflict situation ordinary people do not have the capacity, the responsibility or the authority to deliver resolution. It is only those in political, military or even paramilitary leadership who are in a position to initiate meaningful movement towards a settlement. These two groupings, then, have different needs and must be engaged in different ways.

For those at the grassroots struggling to survive from day to day you endeavour to help them address their needs in ways which bring them into productive relationships with perceived adversaries, in the hope that mutual benefit is derived at both the personal and the community level. This was the purpose behind the Nitra-type conference/workshops.

For the political leaders, however, the *reverse* is the case. While you obviously want to establish sufficient trust to permit a working partnership, you are *not* concerned with building interpersonal relationships between the opposing leaders – this is to be avoided. As the political leaders are the only ones with authority to resolve the conflict, you want to *hold them* to a representation of the extreme positions as they bring their constituencies towards a 'win-win' outcome. It would be pointless if opposing leaders became 'buddies' and no longer accurately represented those fears and

aspirations within their respective communities which gave rise to the conflict. Such leaders would undoubtedly experience ‘re-entry’ problems when they returned to those communities, and might even be replaced by others felt to be more representative of the extremes, with the result that the credibility of the process would be destroyed.

It was now that Camplisson recalled the lessons he had learned from John Burton’s conflict resolution work in Northern Ireland:

One of Burton’s ideas I was drawn to was that of trying to get people into a situation where, with the help of a third party, they could judge whether or not what they were doing was self-defeating. There was no point in *me* telling them that, they had to be placed in a position where they could set out their objectives, evaluate their strategy for achieving those objectives, and then determine *for themselves* whether this strategy was taking them towards those objectives or taking them further away. Furthermore, Burton’s conflict resolution theory holds that people can only ultimately satisfy their *own* needs by recognising that the needs of the enemy have also to be met, and that *they* too have something to say in satisfying the needs of their enemy.

Another of Burton’s assumptions which I share is that it is those on the extremes who feel most acutely the problem which exists. The steadfastness of belief which is often a feature of extremism allows extremists to truly represent that which has given rise to the conflict – and it is *through them that you can get sight of the problem*. Of course, when you start to work with the extremes, assisting a self-analysis of their positions, it needs to be done not in isolation but within a process – where they are sitting across the table from one another – so that both sides can see how their respective positions have evolved and been influenced by the other side.

To harness support for the work he was now committed to, Camplisson and a number of his closest associates established MICOM (Moldovan Initiative Committee of Management).

He began by engaging the Expert Groups in a number of ‘problem-solving’ workshops. However, they had assumed that this meant they could throw onto the table ‘problems’ such as customs, currency, etc –hoping to settle them. But Camplisson believed that settlement of these issues, while helpful in *containing* the conflict, would not *resolve* it. Such issues, he felt, should be used to *foster analysis*, for a ‘problem-solving’ approach was fundamentally analytical. The first stage of this analysis – the ‘mapping out of the conflict’ – would involve the different protagonists determining the *nature* of the conflict, *who* was party to it and who therefore had to be engaged in the search for solutions. Then they had to have a clear, shared understanding of their own and each other’s positions within the conflict, a shared assessment of options (including military) for remedy and what sort of mechanisms were necessary for movement towards resolution. The alternative was that the two sides might indeed agree to some ‘political settlement’ yet continue to regard each other as enemies to be destroyed,

so that while the conflict might be temporarily contained *it would not have disappeared*. The need, therefore, was for the adversaries to redefine their conflict as a ‘problem to be solved’, and keep redefining it until its true nature was clarified.

However, the participants resisted such a step being taken and during one workshop it was apparent that Camplisson had to retreat a little and address immediate needs. This was achieved by introducing the following exercise:

Everyone was given a handful of blank cards. On these cards they were each asked to write down suggestions relating to the following four categories: what they felt *their side* might do to move things towards resolution; what they felt the *other side* might do; what they thought they could *do together*; and, finally, what they thought the *international community* could do.

The exercise produced dozens of ideas, which opened up productive discussions among the two teams of delegates. The process now gained the active support of the Head of the OSCE (formerly CSCE) peace mission, who lauded the outcomes. Although it was not the strictly analytical conflict resolution process Camplisson had been hoping for, it was nevertheless a productive beginning.

## Emergence of the JCDC

The small group of individuals who had come together to assist in the organisation of the Nitra conferences formed themselves into the Joint Committee for Democratisation and Conciliation (JCDC). The emergence of the JCDC was one of the most significant products of the Moldovan initiative. Drawing its membership equally from Moldova and Transnistria, there was no equivalent organisation on either side, and while the political leaderships were being engaged in the separate, but complementary, conflict resolution process, the JCDC had been facilitating community development initiatives in cities, towns and villages. In order to assist the growth and strengthening of the JCDC, both as individuals and as a group, Camplisson felt it would be valuable to engage them in a comparative study with individuals and groups working with similar problems in Northern Ireland.

In 1995 members of the JCDC came to Belfast for a series of workshops, during which various pointers emerged as important in facilitating movement towards conflict resolution:

- There was a need to have (conflict resolution) work proceeding at *all* levels, whether individual, local community or governmental.
- There was a need to ensure that these levels worked in a complementary fashion.
- There was the need to ensure that one or more levels remained functioning even if others were stalling or had failed.
- Legitimate civil rights grievances had to be addressed.
- No-one should be excluded from the process, for those denied the opportunity to



use the ‘force of argument’ more readily resorted to the ‘argument of force’.

- An infrastructure had to be developed which would enable groups from both sides of the conflict interface to meet and enter into dialogue with one another.
- Not all differences of perception or historical interpretation could be resolved, so time should not be wasted striving for agreement on every divisive issue.
- It was important to identify issues on which people *could* talk and work together, such as community development issues. This would help in the building of trust and relationships.
- Disagreeing with one’s opponents did not mean refusing to *listen* to them.
- The raising of community awareness was an integral part of the process, as well as trying to encourage the media to promote its positive side.

The aspect of the exchange with most significance for the JCDC was the realisation that community groups in Northern Ireland were able to work together on a wide variety of issues *irrespective* of whether their society’s conflict was on its way to resolution or not, and that in such co-operation there was no requirement that people in either community need abandon or dilute their deepest aspirations.

## Impasse

On a field trip to Moldova in late 1995, Camplisson found that the governmental Expert Groups were locked in an impasse and even the OSCE could not inveigle them to re-enter dialogue. However, when Camplisson met with the two sides, they both intimated that *he* might bring them together. To their surprise, he informed them that he did not consider this would be useful. He realised that this impasse – and it had not been the first – was symptomatic of a much deeper problem, namely that the *roots of the conflict* were not being fundamentally addressed. As long as these deep antagonisms remained unresolved, any mediated negotiations, therefore, with the expectation upon both sides to make progress, only served to threaten them, forcing them to retreat.

I realised that they needed to step back from things and examine them, and prepare themselves before trying to move forward again. I suggested that they needed new insights into how to deal with their conflict and that one way to do this might be through a ‘study visit’ to Belfast. I fully understood that they had the responsibility to find constitutional arrangements which would allow them to function and survive – and this is what the OSCE was facilitating. MICOM’s role, however, was different – it was to help them, through assisted analysis, to deal with the complexities of the *underlying* conflict between them and their role within that conflict.

Both sides agreed and a study visit to Belfast took place in early 1996. The Moldovan and Transdniestrian delegation found the visit extremely useful. What they saw and heard during their visit confirmed their own views on the counter-productive nature of violence.

Camplisson, in his summing-up at the conclusion of the study visit, made the following comments:

We need to have a clear understanding of our own positions: what it is we are seeking, how we are going to achieve it, and whether or not the strategy we are employing is actually taking us towards our objectives – for very often the lack of clarity on all these things leads us to make decisions which can take us towards violence. And through a deeper understanding we learn that if we seek to satisfy our own needs, we must take cognisance of our adversaries' needs in a sympathetic way. Indeed, we must begin to know our enemy as well as we know ourselves. What does *he* want? Why? What do *we* want? Why? What are his perceptions of us? How do we perceive him?

To be able to reach this point usually necessitates 'third-party' assistance and there are two distinct ways such assistance can be introduced. *Facilitators* like ourselves can help you move towards conflict resolution, while *mediators* like the OSCE and others can assist you in constructing the necessary political framework. The two processes are separate but with care can be made complementary.

During a subsequent summit meeting between the two presidents (the negotiations having resumed again) the importance of MICOM's conflict resolution process, of which the Northern Ireland visit had formed a part, was acknowledged.

## Linking the processes

Not only was it important to establish complementarity between the conflict resolution process and the OSCE mediated negotiations, but it was equally important to demonstrate that the community-based strand of the process was complementary to the strand which engaged the political leaderships. The inter-governmental delegation had been accompanied on its Belfast visit by members of the JCDC, and Camplisson drew the attention of the governmental delegates to the non-governmental part of the process, expressing the hope that as the process deepened the two strands would engage in more exchanges and learn from each other's experiences. That such a linkage was important was noted by one of the governmental representatives:

Some of the most important things we saw here were the initiatives that are going from the grassroots. They are aimed at overcoming contradictions and maintaining an atmosphere of trust.

The development of a positive linkage between the two strands was especially important given the mistrust which had been voiced by elements within the political leadership in Moldova, who felt that they could be challenged by this new leadership emerging within the community development process in the villages, towns and cities. Camplisson had foreseen such a situation arising:

It is our task to help them see that, if they genuinely accept the necessity for

change – which they claim they do – then new types of leadership will inevitably evolve, and that they should see this as complementary to what they themselves were doing, rather than antagonistic.

Of course, there is an element of truth in their fear, for *proper* community development *is* about continuous change. It starts from the interface where the problem is most acutely felt, then moves outwards, forcing responses from, and changes within, the wider social and political system. Governments try to ensure that community development is implemented in quite the opposite way. ‘Community development’ agencies look at communities and say: “Yes, that community is having problems, we’ll give it a dose of ‘community development’: we’ll put in a development officer, who will devise a programme; we will pay the bill, and that should deal with the problem.” Such an approach presupposes that it is the community itself which is the problem, but I would contend that rather than *being* the problem, the community in question is merely displaying *symptoms* of a problem which is located within the system as a whole. To eradicate the community’s ‘problem’, then, *may* require fundamental system change. It is not the community development worker’s role to promote, direct or frustrate such change, however, but merely to facilitate it.

## Bringing government and NGOs into a shared analysis

The ongoing inability to resolve the identity-related and political differences between the two sides – negotiations having reached yet another impasse – was in turn frustrating attempts by both governments, as well as local community organisations and NGOs, to confront the economic, environmental and other problems facing both Moldova and Transdniestria. Hence, it was felt that the most appropriate way to rekindle movement in the negotiations would be to highlight to the Expert Group negotiators the consequences at a grassroots level of the continued failure to achieve resolution. A seminar, to take place in Albena, Bulgaria, was organised by the JCDC and MICOM, in which governmental representatives, along with the international mediators involved in the OSCE negotiations, would be invited to enter into a shared analysis of political, social and economic realities with representatives of NGOs from both Moldova and Transdniestria. The seminar was wide-reaching in its scope, and included:

- an overview of the realities of life in Moldova and Transdniestria, given by Moldovan and Transdniestrian speakers;
- an overview of NGO experiences on both sides of the conflict;
- an identification of problems, whether personal, functional, communal, national or international, and whether relating to social, economic, cultural, political, environmental, educational or other needs;
- a sharing of perceptions around, and an analysis of, those problems which had been identified;
- the determining of needs surrounding: the economy, social welfare, the constitutional

positions, conciliation, the conflict containment and resolution processes, and mechanisms and structures for improving community relations between communities and between communities and government;

- a focus on needs in civil society development: individual, organisational, legal, etc;
- lessons learned from the Northern Irish experience relative to taking ideas forward in Moldova and Transdnistria;
- planning, plan implementation, evaluating action: who does what, where, when, how, on return to Moldova and Transdnistria;
- resourcing plans; available options and creating new options; what could be done to help one another, what could/should governments do, what should the international community do;
- the way ahead and seminar review and conclusions: what expectations had been fulfilled, what frustrations remained, and what were the implications for government policy vis-a-vis NGOs.

All participants found the seminar worthwhile and its methods challenging. The organisers were encouraged by the way in which those from different levels of leadership – non-governmental, governmental, and international bodies – found common cause and worked together in a shared identification of problems and related needs, across a wide variety of issues – from social, economic, educational, cultural and ecological concerns to human and minority rights, the role of the media, the development of civil society and democratic accountability.

The governmental representatives listened to, and expressed their gratitude for, the clearly-stated views of the NGOs. There was wide agreement on the importance of cultural exchanges and ‘people’s diplomacy’ across the ‘peaceline’. Most importantly, a number of action plans were drawn up for local co-operation.

The impact of the seminar confirmed to the members of the JCDC how important their own role was, as one of them explained:

I came to realise that in Transdnistria and Moldova there are many people who sincerely wish to have a resolution of the conflict. The most important conclusion I reached was that it *is* possible for an NGO such as the JCDC to achieve important results in the search for resolution of our conflict. Our work has drawn the attention of our communities and of the political and state leaders. Since 1992 we have created many positive results and involved hundreds of new people in the peace process. We have promoted very constructive initiatives aimed at the resolution of the conflict and community development, which have contributed to the restoration of confidence among our people.

At a follow-up event the Ukrainian representative to the OSCE mediated negotiations read out a letter of appreciation, praising the seminar’s methodology and acknowledging that some of what was discussed at Albena had since become the basis of a new draft document between the Moldovan and Transdnistrian Expert Groups. He added: “...the constructive spirit of the Albena seminar had been transferred completely onto the process of negotiations.”

## Consolidation

A second seminar in Albena again sought to facilitate interaction between governmental and non-governmental sectors, in order to let the former hear about the lives and conditions of ordinary people, and for both to begin to find ways of working together in the development of civil society.

Recognising that the worst effects of the inability to resolve the conflict were being felt most acutely by those living in villages and towns along the conflict interface, a third Albena seminar sought to provide local authorities from this interface with an opportunity to address those needs which could only be dealt with in collaboration with other levels of leadership. At the end of the seminar the local authority representatives stated a willingness to take a leading role in improving relationships across the interface.

A fourth Albena seminar engaged members of the Moldovan and Transdniestrian Parliaments, the purpose of which was to develop collaborative inter-parliamentary action, and to prepare them for the ratification and implementation of any agreements which might be reached in the OSCE mediated negotiations process.

The format for these seminars was similar: the participants were first of all encouraged to identify and analyse the range of problems confronting them, then divide into special interest groups to work on these problems and begin to generate and develop ideas for improvement. In the final workshops participants would focus on the lessons learned and discuss ideas and plans for future actions, with a view to developing and implementing these upon their return home. At the final plenary sessions the workshop outcomes would be shared with the other participants, areas of joint interest and action explored, and conclusions drawn on the way ahead.

A wealth of material resulted from the Albena seminars, one participant describing it as “a basket of ideas and thoughts” which “could help our politicians to move forward towards real solutions.” These seminars were an important boost to the community development strategy, advancing the conflict resolution process contained within it, as well as the self-help efforts ongoing at local community level. However, it was the interaction between the different levels of leadership which was their most significant, and possibly unique, aspect.

In terms of on-the-ground interaction there was a real engagement and a constructive dialogue between the governmental and non-governmental participants. It was also evident that although there were significant political differences between NGO representatives from either side of the Dniester there was nonetheless a general commitment to work towards a solution acceptable to both sides, and, where possible, to collaborate on confronting the problems they each lived with as a consequence of the conflict.

The seminars also impacted on the political and security situation. Following a successful conflict resolution workshop held during the second Albena seminar

the Moldovan and Transdnestrian co-chairs of the Joint Control Commission (the body which oversaw peace-keeping forces –including troops from Russia – in the Security Zone) developed for the first time a joint recommendation. This was subsequently approved by the full Commission, thereby ending a seven-year curfew. Hitherto, unilateral recommendations on the curfew issue received a negative reception from the adversary and were rejected.

All seminar participants also developed their ability to engage in productive relationships with different levels of leadership –parliamentarians, government officials, local authorities, NGOs and others. Furthermore, MICOM saw its efforts to bring parliamentarians and local authorities into the conflict resolution process as a way of forestalling ‘re-entry’ problems for the political leaderships should agreements eventually be signed.

## The Northern Irish connection

At all the seminars representatives were present from different levels of leadership within Northern Irish society: community, local government and party political. As already noted, the JCDC was exposed to the community development process at Northern Ireland’s conflict interface, and members of the governmental Expert Groups were brought to Belfast for a shared analysis of the two conflicts. Significantly, during one such ‘study visit’ one of the Northern Irish participants acknowledged that his own political party had been swept along, often against better judgement, by historical, cultural and other influences, such as innate prejudice. “Our opponents”, he remarked, “had set traps which we, *knowingly*, walked into.” Such comments were a clear indication that self-defeating policies and actions were now being recognised by both sides in Northern Ireland after 30 years, and this new awareness was fostering movement away from that which was self-defeating towards a more objective analysis. Such lessons were invaluable to the Moldovan and Transdnestrian participants.

## Overview

Camplisson asserts that among an increasing number of those engaged in the study of the causes of deep-rooted violent conflict there is a growing acceptance of the existence of a ‘needs paradigm’, as described by Burton, and an acknowledgement that perhaps it is only a conflict *resolution* process – rather than a conflict *management* process – which can realistically hope to deliver needs satisfaction.

Societies engulfed by deep-rooted, identity-related conflict often simultaneously face severe social and economic disruption. Moldova and Transdnestria not only experienced war but also severe socio-economic, political, cultural and technical problems. MICOM’s approach embraces *all* these elements, largely

because its conflict resolution process is accommodated within an overarching community development strategy, which engages with all levels of leadership, from village to governmental.

Community development as understood by MICOM is an instrument of change. It is a professionally-assisted analytical process aimed at the identification and addressing of real needs within an 'indirect' approach to community development – which means that it does not establish organisations or projects, but acts in a catalytic way to encourage *self-help development*. On a practical level, the community development strategy is essentially facilitated experiential learning within a context and focused on participants' developmental needs – at both a personal and an organisational level – relative to their respective functions. Outcomes, through participants, hopefully feed into and impact positively upon social, economic, political and cultural systems.

MICOM's conflict resolution process is accommodated within, and complemented by, this community development process. Alongside the workshops involving the governmental Expert Groups, parliamentarians and others, the normalisation of relationships between Moldova and Transdnistria is also fostered. This promotes the establishment of self-sustaining and mutually beneficial collaborative activities between the conflicting governments, between people, and between people and government.

Despite its philosophical concerns regarding the efficacy of power-based interventions – such as represented by the OSCE mediated negotiations – MICOM acknowledges that the international community is motivated by a genuine desire to prevent human suffering. MICOM has always striven, therefore, to develop a complementarity between the two approaches, in the hope that this will prove mutually beneficial. Through the development and maintenance of such complementarity, it should be possible to ensure continuing *movement towards* conflict resolution following a negotiated settlement. But such complementarity is only possible where the aim of the mediated settlement is partly to advance movement towards conflict resolution.

MICOM's local partner, the JCDC, continues to promote the community development/conflict resolution strategy at all levels of society in Moldova and Transdnistria. Significantly, the JCDC is being called upon to share its experiences with others in the region, and its work is being followed with great interest by many scholars and practitioners in the field of conflict resolution.

Although the Moldovan/Transdnistrian ceasefire still holds, the OSCE process of negotiation remains in place but is almost 'frozen'. The two governments have also been unable to enter fully into MICOM's conflict resolution process, partly because of overriding external power interests over which they have no control. Nevertheless, at both governmental and community level the willingness to engage with MICOM and the JCDC in a range of activities embracing all levels of leadership still remains, as does the belief that a return to war is not an option and a 'win-win' outcome is the most desirable goal.

# Part 2

## *The Guidelines*

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### **1: Basic Human Needs Theory**

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A résumé of the core elements underpinning MICOM's conflict resolution theory and practice.

### **2: MICOM in Moldova**

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An overview of the evolution of MICOM's community development/conflict resolution process in Moldova/Transdnistria and its many interlinking components. An essential element of any 'external third party' involvement is that it should come about by invite from local individuals/parties, who retain ownership of the process. Such authority to become involved is only given when there exists a perception that the external third party has something to offer, whether because of a proven track record or because there is an awareness of the expertise it can bring to the situation.

### **3: Facilitation skills**

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While some useful pointers for an individual facilitator are listed here, facilitation is obviously a team effort. At the core of the team there needs to be a strong facilitation expertise, rooted in a shared understanding of the theory which underpins the team's approach – in MICOM's case, Basic Human Needs theory. The team leader should be a conflict resolution specialist, who will call upon other expert knowledge when deemed appropriate. Ideally, some of the team members might possess such expert knowledge – for example, in international relations, economic systems, etc. – alongside their facilitation skills. At the core of all conflict resolution/community development workshops is a facilitation approach which does not impose an analysis, but assists a self-analysis – whether the focus is on the deep-rooted causes of the conflict or the everyday problems being confronted at the conflict interface.

### **4: Two useful exercises**

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One way of stimulating and helping people to articulate and share feelings and ideas is through 'exercises' – these can often overcome deadlocks or impasses and occasionally bring about changed perceptions. Different facilitators utilise different exercises; these are two which were found to be particularly useful: 'SWOT Analysis' and 'Blank cards'.



## 5: Suggested 'CD' seminar design

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Each seminar (or workshop or conference) will have a different focus, and might involve different participants and even different facilitators. Seminar design needs to be cognisant of the particular level of leadership being engaged. The bringing together of different levels of leadership will also influence design.

For all seminars a preliminary consultation is held between facilitators and the sponsoring group – i.e. the group whose needs the facilitators are addressing – to reach agreement on acceptable objectives. The sponsoring group should determine the burning issue they wish to address and be allowed to identify who should be brought into the seminar as participants. For their part, the facilitators, having clarified the nature of the needs being addressed, should identify whatever outside specialisms they feel could be beneficially introduced into the proceedings. Each seminar/workshop should be tailored to fit not only the desired objectives, but the leadership responsibilities represented by the participants – it would be totally counter-productive to overstretch the participants with objectives which were beyond their capacity or authority to deliver.

MICOM sees no real division between the 'community development' (CD) and 'conflict resolution' (CR) components of the process. However, a seminar bringing together NGO representatives to discuss interface and socio-economic concerns could be seen as falling within the 'CD' category. Likewise, a workshop bringing representatives of the political leaderships into an assisted analysis of the conflict could be seen as pursuing 'CR' objectives. The design will differ in each case. Guideline 5 represents a suggested design for a 'CD' seminar (based on the successful Albena seminars), while Guideline 6 suggests a design for a 'CR' workshop engaging the political leaderships.

A follow-up seminar/workshop with the same level of leadership, particularly if it engages with the same individuals, should endeavour not to cover old ground but try to move forward, perhaps in developing approaches and solutions to whatever problems had been previously identified.

## 6: Suggested 'CR' workshop design

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This is offered as a goal, rather than presented as something which has been proven in practice. However, some of the basic elements contained within this outline have been utilised productively in different aspects of MICOM's work with the top level of political leadership.

It is worth noting that each level of leadership can be engaged in different ways. MICOM and the JCDC have not only been able to bring together the same levels of leadership – e.g. the Moldovan and Transdniestrian Expert Groups –but were able to facilitate linkages between different strata of leadership: for example, by bringing the political leadership into an engagement with local authorities and local community leadership. Such a linkage not only enables all parties to reach a fuller understanding of political and grassroots realities, but could assist with 're-entry' problems if the political leadership prove successful in engendering movement towards conflict resolution.

# 1: Basic Human Needs Theory

- MICOM believes that if a conflict contains significant elements of a deep-rooted, identity-related nature then a process of mediated negotiations (i.e. a 'power-based' process aimed at a compromise settlement) will not by itself bring resolution, and could even leave a legacy of bitterness which will be acted upon by succeeding generations.
- If *resolution* is the ultimate objective, a conflict resolution process must be underpinned and guided by a sound theoretical understanding of the dynamics of deep-rooted, identity-related conflict, and MICOM believes that John Burton's Basic Human Needs (BHN) theory provides this.
- BHN theory holds that, in order to bring about an end to violent conflict, alternatives have to be found to the use of violence as a means of securing the satisfaction of needs, and the only way to satisfy the needs of *all* the parties to a conflict is to engage the parties in an *assisted analysis* in which all their needs can be identified, and in which the violent strategies employed by all sides to satisfy such needs can be seen for what they invariably are – self-defeating.
- Such an analysis will hopefully lead the parties away from the notion of 'an enemy to be destroyed' into seeing their conflict as 'a shared problem to be solved'.
- In order to resolve such a problem BHN theory holds that one's own needs can only be satisfied if the needs of one's enemy are also satisfied, and consequently each party has a vested interest in satisfying the needs of its enemy.
- The assisted analysis proposed by BHN theory can best be carried out by an independent 'third party' team of conflict resolution expert facilitators.
- In summary, the basic aim of assisted analysis is to facilitate movement towards conflict resolution by bringing parties to the conflict to:
  - accept the conflict as a shared problem which may be solved through collaborative action;
  - reject the notion of victory and pursue the idea of a win-win outcome;
  - engage freely with one another in an exploration of existing options, or the development of new ones;
  - work towards the satisfaction of the needs of all parties – particularly those whose frustration or denial gave rise to the conflict.

## 2: MICOM in Moldova

- MICOM's involvement in Moldova –as an 'external third party' – came about by invitation; the process which then evolved was not an imposed one, parachuted in from outside, but grew organically as different needs were identified and remedies sought through self-help action.
- Initially, the targeted needs fell under the category of 'community development' (CD) and conferences were organised (at neutral venues) to bring community leaders and NGO representatives into contact with those who had successfully dealt with such needs in Western Europe.
- To organise these conferences a core group – drawn from both sides of the Moldovan/Transdnistrian conflict –emerged (the JCDC) who were soon able to act as an 'indigenous third party'.
- Workshops and seminars were designed to not only help identify needs and explore remedies, but to enhance the individual and organisational capabilities of all those being brought into the process.
- Receiving further requests for assistance – in regard to resolving the conflict – the CD process was directed at conflict resolution (CR) needs as well. These requests emanated from both grassroots and presidential levels, on both sides of the conflict.
- A separate, highly specialised, CR process, involving governmental representatives, was initiated.
- As these governmental representatives were also involved in a process of mediated negotiations (facilitated by the OSCE and international mediators), the CR process strove to ensure complementarity.
- A Northern Ireland dimension became a major part of the process: members of the JCDC (and others) were brought to see a CD process in operation in Northern Ireland; the governmental representatives were given space to take a step back from their own conflict and look at it from a different perspective; and Northern Irish community and political leaders were regular participants at all workshops and seminars.
- Through these seminars the CD/CR process was further consolidated by the facilitation of productive linkages: between the CD and CR components of the process; between different levels of society – community, NGO, village or local authority, governmental, parliamentary; between different levels of leadership on both sides of the conflict interface; and between the CR process and the process of internationally-mediated negotiations.

### 3: Facilitation skills

- Most importantly, a facilitator should not *bring* an analysis *to* the participants in the way a mediator might do, but instead *assist* the participants to arrive at their *own* analysis.
- *An ability to listen* is important, as also is the *manner* in which one listens, whereby you provide some indication to those in the room that you are taking what they say seriously, and that you are treating them as genuine interlocutors.
- The *ability to foster a conversation* is also important, as is an ability to impart a notion of *critique*, both in asking certain questions, and posing them in ways which challenge what people are saying, not in a manner which is threatening or which belittles them, but which draws them back into the conversation. A form of critique which encourages people to think about the particular positions, values and assumptions that are perhaps unarticulated behind what is being said.
- While traditionally the idea is that the ‘third party’ facilitator simply oversees the process and the dialogue taking place between the parties – as opposed to becoming a ‘participant other’ – good facilitation involves the ability to be able to *provide* something to the participants which helps to move the conversation along, but without it being directive – such as feedback, commentary, or making summaries of the discussion to help people focus.
- Being able to make explicit the nature of the contract between facilitator and group is important. As is being sensitive to when the facilitation process itself might change – a stage might be reached, for example, where a bit more commentary and even direction may be deemed necessary for the survival of the process, as long as this does not inhibit the group keeping responsibility and making their own decisions.

### 4: Two useful exercises

- *‘SWOT analysis’*: explore Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.
- *‘Blank cards’*: Everyone is given a handful of blank cards. On these cards they are asked to write down suggestions relating to the following four categories: what they think *their side* might do to move things towards resolution; what they think the *other side* might do; what they think they could *do together*; and finally what they think the *international community* could do.

## 5: Suggested 'CD' seminar design

Following introductions, agreement on procedures, and the clarification of objectives, the seminar might encompass the following stages:

(1) Participants are encouraged (either in plenary session or in small-group workshops) to identify and analyse the range of problems confronting them. This might involve:

- an overview of the realities of life facing them in their respective communities/societies;
- an overview of their experiences as NGOs/community groups/individuals working in civil society;
- an identification of problems, whether personal, functional, communal, national or international, and whether relating to social, economic, cultural, political, environmental, educational or other needs;
- a sharing of perceptions around, and an analysis of, these problems.

(2) Participants divide into special interest groups to work on these problems and begin to generate and develop ideas for improvement. This might involve:

- looking at lessons learned from other societies (if deemed relevant)
- the determining of needs surrounding each group's special interests, which might include: the economy, social welfare, constitutional issues, the peace process (if one exists), the conflict (if one is ongoing), and mechanisms and structures for improving community relations, not only between communities but between communities and government.

(3) In small-group workshops participants focus on the lessons learned and discuss ideas/plans for future actions. This might involve:

- resourcing plans; available options, new options; what could be done to help one another, what could/should governments do, what could/should the international community do;
- planning, plan implementation, evaluating action: who does what, where, when, and how, on return to their respective communities.

(4) At the final plenary sessions the workshop outcomes are shared, areas of joint interest and action explored, and conclusions drawn on the way ahead.

A product of the seminar should be that participants develop their ability to engage in productive relationships with other levels of leadership. A focus should also be placed on the acquisition of necessary skills by the participants, in whatever areas they feel these skills to be required: personal, professional, social, economic, political, cultural or organisational. Finally, ways of sustaining everyone's involvement in the process should be explored.

## 6: Suggested 'CR' workshop design

*MICOM is hesitant to suggest that there could be a 'blueprint' for an effective conflict resolution (CR) process, as adaptability to individual circumstances is paramount. Nevertheless, the following guidelines might be of value to those seeking to facilitate CR workshops.*

- The process is facilitated by a team of conflict resolution specialists (acting as a neutral external third party), acceptable to all sides.
- Initiation of the CR process is preceded by a series of explanatory meetings with all prospective participants (parties to the conflict) to explain the purpose of the process and how it is to be conducted. The CR process can only begin when such participants see the process as offering something to their interests and concerns. They are then introduced to the notion that there is value in committing themselves to an analysis of needs and the underlying causes of their conflict.
- The process is different from that of mediation, political negotiation, or the search for compromise or short-term accommodation. The team's function at all times is to facilitate *movement towards* long-term conflict resolution among the protagonists. To this end, the parties are encouraged to approach their conflict as a *shared* problem and to engage in a 'problem-solving' process, the essence of which is assisted analysis.
- The preliminary, foundation-laying objective is to engage leaders of the protagonists in a 'mapping out of the conflict' – that is, an identification of all those other party leaders who must be brought into the process for it to succeed. Only those with the capacity to deliver resolution of the conflict, and facilitators, should have a role in the CR workshop.
- At commencement, each side states their fears, interests, concerns and aspirations. These are then subjected by the protagonists, through assisted analysis, to scrutiny aimed at ascertaining the nature of the conflict, the denied/frustrated needs at its core (including those of one's opponents) and the manner of pursuit of needs satisfaction. The facilitators must not provide this analysis, but assist the participants to focus on the difficult and often painful work of honest, open and thorough exploration.
- Successful assisted analysis would clarify the parties' objectives and thereby assist an exploration of those actions and strategies which either hindered or advanced the satisfaction of their respective needs.
- Thoughts and ideas which might prove to be mutually beneficial and boost confidence in the process and in each other would also be

identified and action planned. To this end the parties might look at the experience of other conflicts around the world.

- Ultimately, short and long-term strategies for engendering ongoing *movement towards* conflict resolution might then be agreed upon and set in place.
- In summary, through assisted analysis they:
  - present their perceptions of problems and their related needs, and subject these to in-depth analysis aimed at a shared understanding of causes;
  - listen to the presentations of others and explore how their opponents have sought to satisfy *their* needs and aspirations;
  - assess the self-defeating nature of, or conversely the benefits of, some of their own and their opponents' policies and strategies;
  - identify areas of mutuality;
  - identify areas of conflict;
  - identify impediments to the resolution of their conflict;
  - explore, with the assistance of the facilitators, how such impediments had been, or were being, addressed elsewhere.
- The first indication that *movement towards* conflict resolution is occurring is when the participants agree to undertake their analysis in a *co-operative* way. Meeting together they identify the different needs and aspirations which must be satisfied, and search for means by which this can be achieved.
- Such movement towards conflict resolution begins to be consolidated when the parties reach essential aims within the process: they accept the self-defeating nature of violent strategies; they embrace the idea of searching for a 'win/win' outcome; and they begin a shared search for the satisfaction of all needs – their own and those of their enemy. It is only when this has occurred that the search for solutions surrounding specific issues (problems) should begin. Hitherto, such issues are employed solely as an aid to analysis.
- The process may seek to complement, rather than compete with, any existing negotiating process. Complementarity, however, is only attainable where parties to the negotiations and their mediators give credence to the process of CR, and vice versa. Gains made in the 'problem-solving' process can then improve the efficacy of any negotiating process.

- Unlike mediated negotiations there are no legal or power-related constraints, or pressure to find compromise agreements or solutions. The ‘problem-solving’ process sets no agenda other than that which the participants agree to. This will hopefully compensate for any sense the participants might have that self-analysis is inherently threatening, especially if they engage in such analysis in front of an ‘enemy’.
- If, during the problem-solving process, the parties move away from analysis towards issues or areas where agreement is possible, discussion surrounding these can readily be accommodated in the separate negotiating process. The absence of any expectation to reach political accommodation in the problem-solving process should ensure that it remains available as a trust-building forum should the negotiating process face stalemate.
- Engaging in an assisted self-analysis, for most participants, is a ‘step into the unknown’, and a high degree of self-confidence is essential, both at individual and at delegation level, if the CR process is to be successful. Participants also require an ability to pursue objectives purposefully within the process. In Moldova/Transdniestria numerous activities have been initiated *outside* the CR workshops, but complementary to them, aimed at building such confidence and ability (e.g. ‘study visits’ to other areas of conflict; seminars which foster productive relationships – and engender greater understanding – between different levels of leadership; exposure to community-based interface work; engagement with experts in relevant disciplines; and cultural/social events).