

## Executive Summary

### **Canada's Support for Peace Processes and Women's Participation** Surendrini Wijeyaratne, 2007 -08 Global Youth Fellow

#### **Issue of Focus**

Canada's role in supporting international peace-making efforts is the policy issue being explored for the fellowship. In addition to Canada's role, research attempts to identify what works (and doesn't) in supporting peace processes. Further, lessons and good practice in advancing gender equality and women's participation in peace processes is also central to the study.

Peace processes are concerted efforts to involve parties to conflict in a process of dialogue to jointly reach and implement an agreement to end fighting and set parameters for political, economic and social reforms needed for a lasting peace. Such processes can be formal and informal processes and can operate at private, public, and political levels. The central feature of a peace process is often a negotiated settlement, however as discovered during the fellowship, negotiations alone are not sufficient to ensure a peace process or agreement leads to a lasting peace. The research aims to document and reflect on the perspectives of those involved in peace processes for their recommendations on how donors like Canada should support peace efforts.

Four regions were selected for case studies: Afghanistan; the Democratic Republic of Congo; Northern Uganda; and Southern Sudan. The country studies are intended to illustrate more concretely how Canada has supported peace processes, as well as identify recommendations on donor support from those involved in these efforts for future peace-making efforts.

#### **Methodology and Activities conducted**

Research was based on the following:

- 1) Review of Government of Canada website and public statements related to mediation, negotiation, peace-building, and peace processes;
- 2) Literature review of country-specific studies and more general material in the field of peace processes;
- 3) Interviews with government officials in Canada and in country studies;
- 4) Interviews with Canadian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) active in peace efforts (in Canada and in the selected countries);
- 5) Interviews with individuals from local civil society (in each country), international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), the UN, EU, USAID, and national government representatives.

Semi-structured individual interviews and small focus groups were carried out in Afghanistan (Kabul), the Democratic Republic of Congo (Kinshasa, Goma, Bukavu), Uganda (Kampala, Gulu), and Southern Sudan (Juba). In all cases, the approach was qualitative seeking to better understand the experiences of those participating in peace process and eliciting their recommendations.

In Afghanistan, over the course of January 2008, 58 people were interviewed (27 women, 31 men) including senior level representatives from Canada, the UN, the EU, and the Afghan government.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, 22 individual interviews were held (10 men, 12 women) and a focus group of 15 people, including 10 women and five men were conducted over two weeks in July 2008. Most of the interviews were with civil society representatives and staff of MONUC (the UN mission).

In Uganda, 25 people (10 men, 15 women) were interviewed over the course of three weeks. Senior officials in Gulu, members of the international facilitation team for the peace talks, members of the LRA delegation, as well as religious and traditional leaders were interviewed.

In Southern Sudan, 8 people were interviewed over the course of a week.

In total, over 115 people involved in peace efforts were interviewed for their views and recommendations.

### **Summary of key findings/learning's**

First, findings from all three countries reveal that peace processes should not simply be reduced to negotiations among belligerents to share power. In all three cases, issues of accountability and justice, reconciliation, human rights, and humanitarian issues also needed to be considered, and were often, top priorities for local organizations. While not everything can be included in negotiated agreements, donors and facilitators of peace processes need to pay more attention to supporting other parallel tracks to ensure that broader issues related to the war are addressed. Exploring issues of justice, reconciliation and humanitarian needs of the population are also integral to creating the foundations for agreements to be accepted by the population.

Second, despite numerous international women's rights conventions and resolutions, consideration for gender equality and women's participation is still an after thought in peace processes. When women are included in negotiation delegations, it is after substantial advocacy, and even then, there is only likely to be one or two women on a team. Even good practice of having a couple of women on negotiation teams such as in Uganda, is according to the delegates, still not sufficient for women to actually have influence to raise gender equality and women's rights issues during negotiations. Women in negotiations must also be at a sufficiently senior level on par with her male counter parts in order for her to have influence.

Third, countries making the transition to peace need to know they will be supported through the long and difficult process of recovery and rebuilding. In DRC, Northern Uganda, and Afghanistan, a common fear among those interviewed is that the international community tends to loose interest when the military and media go away. Communities are afraid of loosing international support both in financial terms and political terms. The fear of withdrawal or abandonment by the international community actually creates disincentives for peace.

Fourth, Canadian civil society organizations have played active roles in supporting local NGOs through facilitating peace missions, supporting inter-community dialogue, providing conflict resolution training, and enabling peace-building programs. Too often, these efforts go un-noticed by officials.

Fifth, women often reported that they found themselves ill equipped to negotiate with men, including men in their delegations. Often workshops aimed at building women's capacity to negotiate were 'women only', as such when women returned to mainstream negotiations they found themselves unprepared for the changed dynamic of negotiating with men, and often 'the gun holders'.

Sixth, women's solidarity is not a given. In DRC and Uganda efforts have been made to work with women across conflict lines. There has been success in these areas, but without addressing the root causes of the conflict, and without tangible progress towards peace, solidarity is likely to break down.

Lastly, clarity on policy goals must go beyond CIDA and Foreign Affairs and DND to also look at Canada's economic and trade policies. The research findings from Afghanistan, Northern Uganda, and DR Congo, reveal that *when* Canada does get involved in supporting peace processes, it must also strive to ensure that the various policy goals in the areas of peace and security, development, and trade, each consider their impacts on peace and the fulfillment of human rights.

### **Major Accomplishments & Deliverables:**

Three to four papers are being produced for the Canadian Council for International Co-operation (CCIC) based on the research findings. A discussion paper entitled, *Afghanistan: A Study on Prospects for Peace* was released in March 2008 by CCIC, from which a presentation was made before the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development (SCFAID). Findings from the paper and presentation were included in July 2008, SCFAID report entitled *Canada in Afghanistan*.

Two separate papers for CCIC on the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda are forthcoming in October 2008. These papers will be shared with the NGO community and policy-makers in government and will advocate for continued support for peace efforts in Northern Uganda and much greater support for the volatile peace in eastern DRC.

In addition to the written papers, the opportunity to carry out in-country research with a range of actors involved in peace efforts and synthesize their views into recommendations is a personal accomplishment.

### **Post-Fellowship**

At least two presentations are planned on the subject of peace initiatives in Afghanistan over the next two months.

Advocacy on DRC and Northern Uganda are anticipated over the short term through the Canadian NGO community. Dissemination of the papers will continue over the year.

Continued policy dialogue and development on how Canada should be better equipped to support peace process is expected through CCIC.

In many ways the work is just starting. I expect to engage in more research and advocacy for what works (and doesn't) in terms of peace processes in the immediate to medium term.