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Conflict Management
Konfliktbearbeitung

Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation

Using the Media for Conflict Transformation: The Common Ground Experience

Sandra D. Melone, Georgios Terzis, Ozsel Beleli

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Abstract

As a result of their ability to reach and influence large numbers of people, the media carry immense power in shaping the course of a conflict. Although many examples of the media's negative contribution to the escalation of violent conflicts exist, fair and accurate journalism and media content that builds confidence and counteracts misperceptions may have a potential in both conflict prevention and transformation. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can contribute to this potential by cooperating with the media and promoting pluralism in the communication environment and ethical standards in journalism.

In order to support conflict transformation processes, Common Ground (CG) initiated various projects in crisis regions and areas of political tension, such as Angola, Burundi, Greece and Turkey, Iran and the United States, Liberia, Macedonia, the Middle East, Sierra Leone, Ukraine, Indonesia, and the Balkans, targeting journalists specifically and media content generally. The work of CG is illustrated to outline the potential of media in conflict transformation.

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Interethnic conflict has become a central characteristic of the post-Cold War era as many groups and leaders around the world have turned to ethnicity as the answer to their dilemmas of identity. ***Structural factors***, including economic, social, and political issues relating to wealth distribution and inter-ethnic relations, ***facilitating factors***, including the degree of politicization and ethnic consciousness, and ***triggering factors***, such as a sharp economic shock, sudden escalation of inter-group tension or the collapse of central authority, are generally argued to be the main causes of ethnic conflicts (Costy & Gilbert 1998: 12). The media in conflict-ridden countries often play a significant role in creating and furthering both facilitating factors and triggering factors, for example by utilising 'oppositional metaphors' ('us' vs. 'them') linked to internal and external issues or 'threats' facing the nation (*see* Jager & Link 1993; Van Dijk 1997). In the case of conflict between two countries, the ethnic minorities in one country are often identified as the official representatives of the external 'enemy' regardless of the weakness of the ties between them, while everyday discrimination against them, on the one hand, and their contribution to economic, political and cultural diversity, on the other, are rarely mentioned in the media. The cases of crime committed by ethnic minorities become the central evidence of the 'ungrateful ethnic criminal' image drawn, and 'they' are perceived as a threat to national security and social well-being. Instead of reflecting pluralism in the social and political structures and thereby contributing to the creation of an informed critical citizenry within a country, the media often act as a mouthpiece for ethnic power circles. Thus a deliberate distortion of news coverage for particular interests easily exacerbates the tension between opposed factions and becomes a main trigger of violent conflict (Terzis 2000).

However, while media can, and often do contribute to the escalation of tensions and conflicts, this does not mean that they cannot play a positive role as well. On the contrary, based on the experience of Common Ground (CG), we argue for a more ethical use of the media in order to counterbalance the negative effects and/or reverse the damage that has already been done.

The topic 'conflict and the media' may relate to both the national and international media (such as the so-called 'CNN effect' of war images on TV audiences around the world). However, since it is the national media of the conflict-affected country and region that have the greatest potential in effecting cooperation and even conflict resolution, this paper focuses on these initiatives.

There is a distinction between news journalism and other forms of media. While the former is important for the communication environment of a country, it only represents one component of all of what is referred to as 'the media'. The latter term refers not only to journalism

itself, but may also comprise a whole host of communication types, varying both in content and in format, and ranging from drama and documentary to discussions, using a host of technologies, such as radio, television, print media and the Internet. In this paper we use the expression 'media' in this wider sense.

Founded in 1982, CG is a non-governmental organization (NGO) funded by donations from a range of foundations, governments, businesses, multilateral organizations and individuals. Striving for win-win solutions in cross-cultural integration, CG engages in a long-term process of transformation primarily through media-related projects. This comprises a wide spectrum of very different media work formats, even peace songs, street theatre, posters or comics . Using one of these types or a combination of activities, CG strives to strengthen local capacities to deal with conflict. CG has been working in Angola, Burundi, Greece and Turkey, Iran and the United States, Liberia, Macedonia, the Middle East, Sierra Leone, the Ukraine, Indonesia, and the Balkans.

Before illustrating the work of CG in detail, the next section will address a number of key issues underlying our understanding of the media. Section three will then focus on the potentials of media in transforming conflict situations and give a list of possible means to develop these potentials by NGOs as used by CG. In section four, we offer some insight into both: how to initiate and structure the work on the ground in a step-by-step process of pre-project assessment, implementation and post-project evaluation. These general guidelines are illustrated with specific examples of CG projects. The conclusion will examine some open questions which remain.

II. Key Issues for Media in Conflict Regions

Before discussing the possible positive role and effects of the media in conflict-ridden societies in detail, a number of issues should be clarified:

Tensions frequently escalate in situations where information is scarce. Offering a variety of information that contains a range of facts, perspectives and opinions would therefore be a de-escalating measure.

The media cannot be neutral towards peace: While news journalists may react strongly against such a claim by holding their 'professional objectivity' above everything else, they must realise that the way in which they report on and about a certain conflict can drastically affect the audience's perception of the situation and thus may influence further developments. While we would not want to endorse the idea that the news media may be controlled and used for specific purposes, even that of peace, the perception that journalists ought to be 'neutral' needs

to be overcome. Simply by being there and reporting on a conflict, the media alter the communication environment and are thus inherently involved in the conflict and non-neutral. Furthermore, there is a very fine line between discarding one's objectivity and viewing events with a certain attitude towards conciliation. In other words, though the media are usually run for profit, and, moreover, conflict sells better than cooperation, journalists should ensure balanced reporting with a view to preventing the escalation of tensions. It is possible to move in this direction by covering peace initiatives - at the very least – in as much detail as renewed escalations, by choosing to counter hate speech, and thus reducing the negative potentials of the media in conflict situations.

Media that are sensitive towards the task of promoting tolerant and diverse viewpoints can be both informative as well as entertaining and have a large potential audience (Botes 1996).

In strengthening local capacities' efforts, assistance can focus on three different aspects of local media structures: creating an open media culture that allows different voices to emerge and be heard, enhancing professional training and education for journalists, and supplying technical equipment to local media institutions.

Although external actors may be conducting these media initiatives, local actors, such as journalists, editors and technicians should be included into the process from the beginning if the project is to have any chance of success. As Clements has stated, ". . . external organizations do not solve other people's problems, and if they do, they are engaged in a deception" (*see* Clements in this Handbook, p. 23).

III. Potential and Means of the Media in Conflict Transformation

McNair (1999, 21-22) suggests five functions of the communication media in 'ideal type' democratic societies. First, to inform citizens of what is happening around them. Second, to educate them as to the meaning and significance of the 'facts'. Third, to provide a platform for public political discourse that must include the provision of space for the expression of dissent. Fourth, to give publicity to governmental and political institutions (the watchdog role of journalism), and finally to serve as a channel for the advocacy of political viewpoints.

Consequently, the media have a large potential for creating a common basis and thus cultivating conditions for conflict transformation through a variety of activities. First, they can serve an ***informing and educating function*** by securing a free flow of accurate and constructive information, counteracting misperceptions, identifying the interests

underlying the issues, and helping to build a consensus (Manoff, 1998). This may include providing information about human rights as much as about the principles of good governance and parliamentary democracy and democratic election.

Second, they can further ***build confidence and mediate*** between conflicting parties by fostering communication, generating alternative options to violent conflict, reflecting the ordinary person's desire and need for peace, communicating the process of negotiations to the constituencies involved and providing a forum for on-going dialogue (Siebert 1998).

Third, they may ***act as a watchdog*** on leaders to help ensure long-term accountability, monitor human rights violations and, in a broader sense, provide some early warning on potential escalations of the conflict.

The appropriateness and effectiveness of these activities will vary not only according to the type and phase of the conflict, but also according to the role that the media have played within the conflict dynamics. These factors must be analysed and determined in a pre-project assessment (*see* below).

Since the essence of conflict transformation is the transformation of mentalities, both within the society and the individual, societies have to be involved from the top-down and the bottom-up. The media have the potential to be a gateway through which to reach the largest possible number of people (Melone 1997, 188).

There is a diversity of means to support local media in reaching these goals. So far, CG has worked with the following approaches (the relevant projects or countries are mentioned in brackets):

1. Approaches and services for journalists and media owners:

- Dialogue facilitation, consensus-building, cross-cultural understanding and collaboration (in Angola, Burundi and the Greek-Turkish project),
- Workshops to help defuse inflammatory coverage (Macedonia, the Middle East, and Sri Lanka),
- Training local journalists and students in conflict resolution skills using various media and materials (Greek-Turkish project, Angola, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone and Liberia),
- Joint media projects (Greek-Turkish project, and the Middle East project),
- Facilitating meetings between media owners (Greek-Turkish project),

- Radio programmes fostering dialogue and cooperation between journalists from hostile groups (Rwanda, Liberia).

2. Production of TV series:

- Documentaries about persons making a difference in their community (Angola),
- Series presenting an intimate look at the lives and concerns of ordinary people throughout a country, with particular attention to successful efforts to rebuild the nation's economy, politics and society (Bosnia),
- Soap operas for children (Macedonia, Cyprus),
- Productions that explore how people and governments manage to resolve conflicts (series sent across the whole African continent).

3. Weekly radio programmes tackling topics from politics and economy to cultural and women's issues, trying to build consensus on contentious issues (Bosnia, Burundi).

4. Interethnic newspaper reporting projects in the areas of media, education and the environment, e.g. the production of a series which covers contentious issues from the points of view of all ethnic groups of a country (Macedonia).

5. Recording of peace songs with the help of the most popular musicians from diverse political backgrounds (Angola).

IV. Necessary Steps in Media-Project Planning

Of course, there is no magic recipe for implementing a successful media project for positive conflict transformation. Nonetheless, there are three basic steps that every project should take in order to ensure accountability as well as effectiveness and sustainability: first, pre-project assessment, second, a clear project design and, third, post-project evaluation.

IV.1 The First Step: Pre-Project Assessment

Context Analysis should include not only an analysis of the country's (or countries') histories and dynamics of conflict but also the overall political situation.

- What type and phase of conflict are faced by the country concerned? Is this an appropriate time for a media-based intervention for conflict transformation?

- What role have the media played in the conflict so far?
- Would the political bodies and civil society encourage the entry of an NGO into the national media environment(s)?
- What are the views of the people on the various sides of the conflict?

Assessment of the Media should analyse capacities and needs. In designing a media project, the preparation will have to include an assessment of the national media landscape and capacities, and determine whether foreign-funded involvement is likely to counter weaknesses and satisfy needs.

- What is the state of the national media landscape(s) and communication environment in general? (This means. assessing state control and ownership of media and ascertaining whether there is a variety of professional and impartial news media).
- Which communication avenues are available? What are the audience ratings for different media and what is the level of access to different media?
- Which sources are trusted by the society?
- How is the inter-media agenda setting work in the countries involved? Which media are considered prestigious enough to set the agenda for the others?
- What logistical, material and human resources are available in the country(ies) in conflict to establish a media initiative?
- What will be the method of production and who will produce it?

Depending on the nature of the conflict and the cultural geography in the field, these questions will produce very different answers, causing appropriate strategies to vary widely. This in turn will directly influence project design and implementation.

Case Study 1: Pre-Project Assessment - Radio Production in Burundi

Context analysis

After the genocide in Rwanda, it was apparent that something had to be done in order to help prevent the escalation of violence in neighbouring countries. Burundi, in particular, seemed to be in danger, bearing in mind that 200,000 had been killed there before the genocide in Rwanda.

On a first assessment mission in 1994, CG realised that there were indeed a number of peacebuilding initiatives emerging in Burundi; however, all of these community-based groups were developing along ethnic division lines. There were no groups emerging with members of both Hutus and Tutsis working for a common goal. It therefore seemed necessary to develop the ability to triangulate the relationship between ethnic groups and build a safe haven for people from different groups to work together. In order to start in this direction, CG was invited to Burundi by the *Special Representative of the Secretary General of the UN*

to Burundi Ambassador Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, who had been facilitating talks between representatives of the different groups. The media were deemed a crucial element in bringing Hutus and Tutsis together, especially after the experience in Rwanda had shown the aggravating role played by radio in inciting violence. Furthermore, after listening to people on the streets, it was evident that the talking heads on TV were far removed from normal people's daily lives – hardly surprising, considering that the former come from the military establishment of the Tutsi in the capital, while 80 per cent of Burundians, and thus the large majority of radio audiences, are Hutu peasants from the countryside.

Assessment of the Media – capacities and needs
Although there had been a time of relatively free press in Burundi, the situation had changed by1994: highly centralized and controlled by the government, the media landscape was characterized by only very few alternative voices which in turn were very radical and violent. This meant that any new media initiative would have to work through existing channels, namely the national radio. As a result, CG started building coalitions striving for a win-win situation: the national radio was interested in good programming obtained without additional costs and from a source that would not turn into a competitor. Following this pre-project assessment, CG not only provided broadcasting material but also built a production studio, all of which was to complement, not supplement, existing radio stations. In return, CG would gain access to the radio and supply wide audiences with alternative programmes in various formats, whose content would be determined in consultation between CG and the national radio.

IV.2. The Second Step: Project Design & Implementation

CG's experience suggests that there are three basic types of media projects aiming at contributing to conflict transformation: those targeted at journalists, those addressing the media content, and those attempting to shift the political context.

IV.2.1. Projects Targeting Journalists

To counter the media's negative potential in the escalation of tensions, journalists and consequently their audiences should be encouraged to learn more about the various positions of the 'other'. Conflict-transforming media should discuss them in public, and eventually report underlying and explanatory facts and issues concerning, for example, the political and social realities of the 'other'; they should also adopt an in-depth and analytical approach to reporting the conflict. Journalists should avoid presenting certain views or actions of individuals as belonging to a whole ethnic group. Instead they should portray them

as individuals inside the ethnic groups or as representatives of a specific interest group. At the same time they should offer various alternative concepts, frameworks, perspectives and interpretations. Examples of project types likely to achieve this are: joint workshops with journalists from opposing sides, internships in the 'other side's' media, establishing regular Internet communication and founding cross-ethnic journalists' networks as well as support for a generally more professional journalism away from mere propaganda (Terzis & Ozgunes 2000).

Case Studies 2: Two Projects Targeting Journalists

Training for journalists in Greece and Turkey
In determining the appropriate type of training for journalists, the specific conditions of the media in a given country, including its education and professional training, technical equipment, and the attitudinal tendencies of journalists must be considered. In the case of Greek and Turkish journalists, who have access to financial and technological resources, the most important aim is to build bridges and bring together members of the two groups. Thus CG started running training sessions with journalism students and journalists from both countries. Taught by journalists and academics in English, these sessions include analyses of the conflict and an introduction to conflict resolution theory. They take place in Greece and Turkey, thereby introducing the participants to the reality in the other country and contrasting it with the images of a dehumanised enemy.

Joint reporting in Macedonia
When CG began its work in Macedonia in 1993, the printed press and its audience were strictly divided along ethnic lines in their own kind of ethnolinguistic ghetto, i.e. the Albanian press was read by Albanians, and the Macedonian press was read by Macedonians. To counter this, CG initiated a Macedonian-Albanian-Turkish and Roma reporting team that would go out and report together on initially 'apolitical' issues such as health care and the education system. The key was to get all existing newspapers on board and ensure that each jointly-written article would be published identically in the different papers. Since the beginning of this work, around ninety such articles have been published and most Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish and Roma print journalists are believed to have passed through this programme.

IV.2.2 Projects Targeting Media Content

In breaking the cyclical nature of ethnic conflicts, projects aiming at changing media content are necessary. They should be guided by two general principles in order to ensure a long-term impact.

First of all, media should offer a ***balanced analysis of the history of the conflicts***, viewed from different sides and perhaps contributing to the recognition of injustices and associated historical wounds. Reconciliation after violent conflicts depends largely on a process of transactional contrition and forgiveness between the 'historical enemies'. This process is crucial for the gradual establishment of a new relationship based on mutual acceptance and reasonable trust. The media's potential to reach and influence large numbers of individuals puts them in a position to become a central actor in this process of reconciliation (Montville 1991).

Second, the media content should ***promote identities other than ethnicity***. Once the groups in conflict have managed to heal the wounds of their historical differences, they should then be supported by the media to build trans-ethnic identities. Such identities can assist them in finding common grounds and developing ties based on common interests. Media content that reveals different aspects of the societies in conflict, such as women's aspirations and achievements, common environmental problems, business prospects, or disaster relief, can contribute significantly to the creation and strengthening of alternative cross-cutting identities and to the flourishing of non-ethnic notions of citizenship (Sofos 1997:269).

Projects focusing on the media's content may initiate and foster the exchange of articles between newspapers of different ethnic groups on a regular basis. They may encourage reports and studies on the ways in which everyone could profit from cross-ethnic cooperation . They should also create new fora within the media to promote progressive and resolution-oriented discussions, for example providing more appropriate and extensive coverage of peace proposals.

Case Study 3: Projects Targeting Media Content

Documentaries in Greece and Turkey
Derived from a pre-project discussion among journalists from both Greece and Turkey who serve as an advisory board to CG, content for media work is clustered in six different sets of issues: similarities and differences in the past, present and the future respectively. In terms of differences, this may turn into a TV or radio documentary 'scratching the wounds of the past', thus offering a chance to mourn together. With regard to similarities, the media can try to foster identities as alternatives to the ethnic Greek and Turkish ones. For example, this could mean building professional cross-ethnic business identities, such as those of members of construction companies, fisheries or lace-makers. In producing documentaries about members of these professional groups in both Greece and Turkey, CG emphasizes not merely the shared interests but the shared habits, similar dress codes and culture that define these groups as alternative identities and illustrate how they can co-exist or

even cooperate. In addition to these professional identities, CG works on gender identities (e.g. similar problems and customs of women in both countries), cultural identity (e.g. the history of music from early days – when the music of both countries was influenced heavily both mutually and from the same outside influences - to today's rock), and environmental problems (e.g. the problems of pollution in the Aegean Sea that affect both countries).

IV.2.3 Multilevel/Holistic approach

Efforts to realise the potentials of the media must be part of a concerted action by different actors to shift the political culture in which the media operate, away from mutual ethnic stereotyping, marginalization and power-grabbing on ethnic bases towards a culture of open dialogue, mutual respect for different life-styles, and controlled power-sharing. Approaches limited only to the media often fail to address the 'structural' factors that gave rise to the conflict in the first place. Thus efforts to transform individual and societal mentalities should be extended to include governmental and non-governmental organizations, businesses (including media owners), public opinion leaders, academics and marginalized sections of the society. It is only through such a multilevel/holistic approach that the media's potential to contribute in transforming a conflict can eventually be realised since these actors constitute the umbrella under which media can formulate the specific content of their programmes and activities (Terzis & Ozgunes 2000).

CG has developed various operational methods including mediation and facilitation, and less traditional ones like TV production, radio soap opera, and community organising. Applying several tools at the same time increases their overall impact. Thus CG carries out comprehensive, multi-pronged initiatives combining the production of TV programmes, radio soap opera and drama, music video, journalist training or cross-ethnic team reporting. In Macedonia, the Middle East, and Sri Lanka, CG has co-sponsored workshops for journalists to help defuse inflammatory coverage. The multi-part series produced by trans-ethnic teams of journalists in Macedonia (*see* Box I) serves at the same time as a training instrument for journalists from both sides and helps to promote the intended shift in political culture. In the Middle East, CG publishes a quarterly newsletter for journalists on regional cooperation and has produced a unique book on arms control, written by Arab, Iranian, Israeli and Turkish authors. Additionally, papers on other subjects such as non-violence, the impact of the Israeli-Palestine crisis on the environment in the region, etc. are co-authored and published by traditional foes – including Arabs and Israelis. Moreover, in the Middle East, CG sponsors workshops to examine stereotypes and promote anti-bias education and cross-cultural understanding.

However, most of these media-related activities have been combined with other peacebuilding activities such as forums and round tables, 'joint action' projects (getting groups and persons who confront each other as enemies to cooperate on shared problems), pro-active mediation between conflict parties, cross-ethnic cooperation within professions (such as editors, human rights activists, film-makers and scientists), and community-organising with special emphasis on empowering women in peace-making activities.

Case Study 4: Multilevel/Holistic Approach

Trust-building process in Burundi
For some years, Burundi has seen a peace process led by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and since recently under the aegis of Nelson Mandela that brings all leaders of the various factions out of Burundi to convene every couple of months. However, there was no constructive communication in between these official meetings. To find a mode for daily trust-building in a more personal setting, CG has been working for the past five years with Jan van Eck, a white former ANC member of the South African Parliament. In order to bring about a gradual political shift in Burundi, he started by listening and getting to know the people from all sides before becoming involved in the official peace process and acting as a go-between, thus bringing parties together. This work ties into CG's media work in various ways: for example, Jan van Eck has convinced some representatives of the different groups to come together in a radio show, creating a round table with three or four politicians on air.

IV.3 The Third Step: Post-Project Assessment and Evaluation

The last step of programme development includes evaluation, which allows organizations to determine whether their programmes are fostering peace. Assessing the *impact* of programmes, especially those concerning peace and conflict, has provoked heated debate (*see* PCIA in this Handbook). In a far more limited sense, *project evaluation* can be as simple as creative listener feedback, such as a call for opinions delivered to a mobile unit in a central location or documenting informal audience feedback following a radio broadcast. In Macedonia, for example, the effect of CG's TV soap opera for children was measured by conducting a survey among children who had and those who had not watched the series. Asking them whether they would invite a child from the other ethnic group, the percentage of affirmative answers jumped from 25 per cent to 75 per cent among children who watched the show.

To go beyond merely mirroring audience satisfaction, post-project assessment should also involve structured interviews and discussions with members of the target audience as well as surveys or

other forms of elaborate data collection. The crucial point is to identify ways to measure the achievement of objectives and carry out these measurements. Using a thorough assessment methodology will not only contribute to more conscientious programme development; it will also facilitate self-critical project evaluation and the establishment of a documentation system that will enable a long-term learning process.

The information generated by programme assessment serves multiple purposes. For this type of project, the short-term purpose of assessment is to provide feedback on the progress towards programme and activity goals and to feed this information into future programme decisions. The latter helps to provide continuity of the programmes and the progression towards long-term organizational objectives. A critical assessment might, for example, uncover the need to reformulate programme objectives, change a format, alter the target audience or even stop the programme altogether.

Moreover, the assessment process serves as an opportunity to verify whether or not conflict resolution strategies are guiding programming and work within the projects: producers may ask themselves how their programme, for example, reduces stress for the audience, whether it models cooperative strategies, and applies principles of anti-discrimination and tolerance (DFID, 2000).

Case Studies 5: Post-Project Assessment and Evaluation

Radio programming in Burundi
Assessing their radio production work in Burundi, CG realised that they were no longer reaching one key part of the population with their productions: namely youth. Teenage boys in particular, however, are a vital part of what might happen in the future within a society and are at risk of choosing the option of violence. In Burundi, many young people already exhibit a high degree of violence, not least because they are desperate for entertainment. CG therefore decided to redesign their programmes to include music and different content specifically for kids, such as interviews by kids for kids. Today, CG has a huge audience in this age group, especially in the camps, where the average age is particularly low. In improving their work for a young target group, CG is actively cooperating with UNICEF.

Working with the wrong media in Bosnia
In 1996, CG started running a call-in radio show on social issues, known as “Resolutions Radio“, that was aimed at finding commonalities and identifying ways to work through problems voiced by listeners. After three years an impact assessment was conducted; its findings indicated that radio was simply the wrong media for this purpose, since most of the Bosnian people had access to and preferred TV at that time.

Based upon CG's experience, there are five dimensions of projects which can cause serious failure:

1. **Funding:** Either the source of funding can turn into a problem, if locals regard the country of origin as less than neutral, or funding constraints, especially in terms of time, can seriously impede work on the ground.

2. **Medium:** Without a thorough pre-project assessment, project organisers might choose the wrong medium and thus either forgo any impact or only manage to address a limited audience, e.g. TV programmes in Africa, where the general population has no access to electricity and TV.

3. **Content:** Here the particular danger lies in producing another form of propaganda in the form of patronising advice and information.

4. **Timing:** Within the dynamics and development of a specific conflict, there may be times when an involvement will be hazardous or counter-productive, by, e.g. spoiling ongoing secret negotiations.

5. **Added Value:** In many conflict areas, the number of active NGOs may easily cause an overload of activities. Thus each involvement must be cross-checked with the question "What added value can this particular project bring in this location?"

The question of added value is the most complicated to answer. This can be illustrated by CG's experience in Radio Programming Bosnia (*see* Box : Case Study 6).

Case study 6: Assessment of Added Value

Radio programming Bosnia
The professionalism of the partners in the "Resolutions radio" project (see Box IV) had increased. The overall situation in Bosnia thus became calmer, enabling locals to speak across the divides. Numerous other media projects were also under way in Bosnia (which made it difficult to find additional funds) and radio turned out to be the wrong medium (see Box IV). All of this, in turn, begged the question what exactly CG's added value would be in Bosnia. As a result, the decision was taken to pull out entirely. (An additional reason for this decision was that the relationship between the foreign CG members on the ground and the local Bosnian team became strained.)

One further key question remains, which 'outsiders' starting to implement media projects in conflict-ridden areas have to ask themselves. They need to know under what conditions they are legitimised to intervene in the media landscape of a country or region. In considering the answer, several issues must be continually reassessed throughout the design, implementation and final impact evaluation of each project. The project planners, partners and implementers have to make sure

- that the project will not impose our own value-system,
- that it will not worsen the situation (e.g. during negotiations for example),
- that adequate resources are available and that the limits are clear,
- that the right local partners will be found,
- that local ownership and sustainability of the programmes are ensured without creating artificial means of sustenance, and
- the conditions of terminating a project are clear so that the courage to pull out can be found.

These challenges can only be accomplished in close connection and collaboration with the local actors, who should be the compass that guides our activities. Only by following their needs can our work have a positive impact in conflict transformation.

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