



## 9 Establishing Infrastructures for Peace

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*“Giving peace an address.”*

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We are familiar with the term ‘infrastructure’ in relation to the social, economic and technical infrastructure of a country or an organisation. There, it refers to the underlying foundation and the basic physical and organisational framework, structures, services and facilities such as buildings, transport systems and power supplies, which an entity needs and uses in order to work effectively. What infrastructures does peace need? A burgeoning term in the peacebuilding field, *infrastructures for peace – i4p* (or *peace infrastructures*) constitute a multitude of tangible and

**INFRASTRUCTURE FOR PEACE** | all things tangible and intangible that contribute to sustaining peace through (re)building constructive social and political relationships and transforming conflict. Also the resources, structures and mechanisms for enhancing societal resilience – the ability to recover from setbacks, overcome trauma and build the resources to adapt to change and adversity.

intangible elements that contribute to sustaining peace through (re)building constructive social and political relationships and transforming conflict. i4p also constitute the resources, structures and mechanisms for enhancing societal resilience – the ability to recover from setbacks, overcome trauma and build the resources to adapt to change and adversity. All these constituents are *networked and interdependent* and are kept alive through dynamic communication and interaction.

i4p may constitute entities and processes at various levels of formality: formal, non-formal and semi-formal, and may accordingly encompass national, subnational and local/community levels. In some cases, they are established top-down, while in others they evolve more organically bottom-up. They may be formal national institutions, such as peace ministries, which are ideally connected to local mechanisms for dealing with conflict, such as local peace committees. They may respond to political crisis, stimulate fundamental change or address transitional issues (e. g. National Dialogue and truth and reconciliation commissions). They may be informal networks at the community level for early warning/action. Some i4p evolve as temporary mechanisms for addressing short-term triggers of violence, e. g. during election periods, and then eventually wind up. In many cases, however, permanent institutions and mechanism are established to address long-term socio-economic structural violence and the socio-cultural discourses that legitimise it. These

## Constituents of i4p

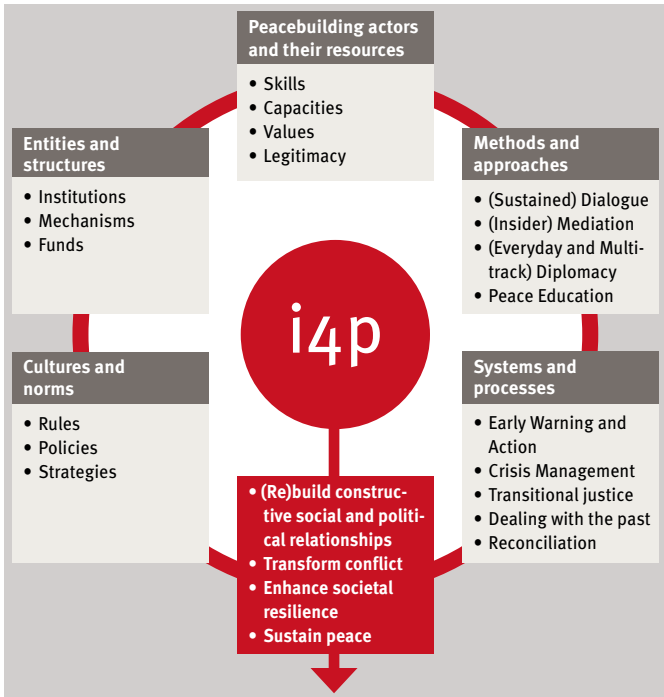


Figure 4, source: Berghof Foundation; Mir Mubashir et al.

i4p may need to change and evolve over time to address the conflict dynamics.

A fluid and “networked” model of i4p can ensure horizontal and vertical coordination: formal political settlement efforts by state actors can be bridged to grassroots peacebuilding efforts of insider peacebuilders/mediators. Engaging with insider mediators has been a focus of the Berghof Foundation for many years.

### Considerations for establishing i4p

There is still a lot to be done to exhaustively map, identify and understand existing i4p. While it has been popular since the mid-1990s to speak of local capacities and approaches, much more could be done to share experience and improve collaboration to strengthen this local expertise. Some points to keep in mind, based on lessons learned in the practice of establishing i4p:

#### *Letting i4p organically evolve and become sustainable*

i4p need to evolve organically, according to the needs of the specific conflict context; they cannot be prescribed or result from international pressure. International actors must avoid a “one size fits all” approach of transporting blueprints between contexts. They should instead be willing to learn from the local cultural, ethnic and religious contexts and help to shape the evolution of i4p, if asked to do so. They must be seen as legitimate and trustworthy by all conflict stakeholders. This may even open up opportunities for insider funding of i4p, perhaps with local and national entrepreneurs earmarking financial resources to support them. If i4p are primarily created with international donors’ project funding, it is important to ensure that they are able to continue functioning when the funding runs out.

#### *Managing inclusivity*

Being inclusive and participatory is a challenging endeavour in governance and peacebuilding with regard to scope, quality and ‘will’ (→ Inclusivity and Participation). While at the local/community level – such as local peace committees or community policing mechanisms – scope and quality may be manageable, in many contexts inclusivity is a challenge. Especially in traditional, patriarchal and gerontocratic societies i4p tend to be exclusionary of women, young people and marginalised groups. Managing scope and quality is more challenging for i4p at the subnational and national level. Incremental and iterative inclusion mechanisms (as in peace processes and National Dialogues) may prove beneficial in this regard. It is important to energise the

“networking engine” of i4p. This “engine” is made up of entities and individuals, especially insider mediators, who can keep the communication alive between various i4p constituents, and also deal with “spoilers” who attempt to render i4p ineffective and disrupt communication flows.

#### *Keeping networking and communication alive*

Managing local-subnational-national-international connections and coordination is easier said than done. In particular, the crucial subnational links between the local and national layers of i4p are often neglected or under-resourced. Insider mediators usually play a key role in keeping an overview of the linkages (and the lack thereof), and raise awareness and mobilise resources accordingly. The state sometimes plays a coordinating role, albeit to a limited degree.

#### *Handling exploitation*

The permanence of certain i4p as state institutions may make them vulnerable to corruption and abuse by political parties. International actors may also exploit certain i4p for their own agendas. All i4p constituents should contain an accountability and integrity mechanism, which can re-evaluate their mandate, and staffing, and dissolve the institution if need be.

#### *Rethinking dependency*

i4p should not entirely depend on the support and political will of state or international actors. As mentioned above, they should be seen as embedded in the ‘everyday’ notions of peace in the different layers of social and political life. i4p are, however, more effective if there is a political commitment from the state and conflict parties to contribute to their functions.

## Background knowledge ...

### First of its kind in the development of the i4p concept

One of the first instances of i4p emerged in South Africa: a National Peace Secretariat, and Peace Committees at several levels – local, regional and national – were established to supervise the implementation of the 1991 Peace Accord. Building on joint and inclusive ownership, these institutions were part of a comprehensive framework for peacebuilding. The Peace Committees, for example, are thought to have helped to determine South Africa's political future by bringing apartheid to a halt in 1994. The South African i4p were successful in containing violence and preparing the ground for peaceful elections.

### A top-down i4p

To ensure the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2006 and to coordinate national peace efforts, Nepal established the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction. The ministry linked government institutions with local peace councils and mediation centres. The Nepalese i4p's service functions included negotiation support, advice to political parties, and access to justice through community mediation.

### A bottom-up i4p

Local initiatives to address resource and political conflict in Wajir County in Northern Kenya in the early 1990s were such a great source of inspiration that they became institutionalised in national policy. The National Steering Committee on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management now coordinates the work of peacebuilders and institutions on a national scale.

### An institutionalised i4p

The National Peace Council of Ghana institutionalised the efforts of networks of insider mediators to prevent and address

election-related violence in particular. The state created a Peace-building Support Unit to coordinate with other government agencies, and also appointed Peace Promotion Officers at subnational levels.

### **The power of multi-layered regional i4p**

Early warning and response systems used by the African regional organisations ECOWAS and IGAD rely on networks of local monitors who also act as first response teams, exploring and mediating local tensions while also alerting and involving governmental and regional actors.

### **i4p responding to crisis and transition**

Tunisia's Quartet (a coalition of non-state actors led by the General Labour Union, UGTT) played a crucial role in creating a political space for dialogue and cooperation, mediating tensions and ensuring the political transition after the 'Arab Spring'. The Quartet was not a governmental body, but as the members were influential and considered credible actors across constituencies, it proved to be a critical component of the Tunisian national infrastructures for peace.

### **i4p mechanisms for dealing with the past**

Truth and reconciliation commissions are an important component of transitional justice. The commissions enable society to understand and reflect on the painful past and to build a new national identity. Truth commissions in El Salvador proved essential in instigating a review of the legal system and improving the protection of human rights in the country.

## References and Further Reading

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- ECDPM and EU (2012).** “*Strengthening National Capacities for Mediation and Dialogue: National Dialogue Platforms and Infrastructures for Peace.*” Factsheet – EEAS Mediation Support Project – Knowledge Product. Brussels: European Centre for Development Policy Management. European External Action Service.
- Hans-Joachim Giessmann (2016).** “*Embedded Peace. Infrastructures for Peace: Approaches and Lessons Learned.*” UNDP.
- John Paul Lederach (2012).** “*The Origins and Evolution of Infrastructures for Peace: A Personal Reflection.*” *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development* 7 (3), 8–13.
- Jordan Ryan (2012).** “*Infrastructures for Peace as a Path to Resilient Societies: An Institutional Perspective.*” *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development* 7 (3), 14–24.
- Barbara Unger, Stina Lundström, Katrin Planta and Beatrix Austin (eds.) (2013).** *Peace Infrastructures: Assessing Concept and Practice.* Berghof Handbook Dialogue Series 10. Berlin: Berghof Foundation.

## Online Resources

- Peace Portal, Infrastructures for Peace,** <https://www.peaceportal.org/web/i4p>
- Special Issue: *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development*,**  
<https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rjpd20/7/3>
- Feature: Insider Mediators, Berghof Foundation,**  
<https://www.berghof-foundation.org/featured-topics/insider-mediators/>