

2009

Adaptive Solutions

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PEACE & DEVELOPMENT REPORT

Conflict mitigation observation, discussion, and improvement related to the UNDP
Communities Program

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1. OVERVIEW

Tajikistan

What has been done in the area of conflict mitigation and resolution, the situation as it currently exists, and the intentions of this report.

It is evident from a desk review of the related documents, research materials, and interviews with both UNDP staff and local leadership at the target communities that the UNDP Communities Program has done a good job of identifying many of the root causes contributing to conflict in these areas. Further, it has undertaken important steps to mitigate conflict through a variety of trainings (cultural sensitivity, conflict mitigation, negotiation skills), the creation of an “early warning system” for the purposes of conflict related data collection, and the establishment of joint cross-border early recovery projects aiding communities on both sides of the Kyrgyzstan/Tajikistan border.

These forms of community education and action have helped to challenge and organize communal thinking, as well as guide new behaviors. It is evident that progress has been made, but equally that the advancements that have been achieved are tenuous, uneven, and insufficient to stimulate long-term change or induce lasting peace. UNDP has been successful in their efforts to initialize dialogue between people with a troubled history and to inspire them to begin taking action together. These encouraging beginnings have opened the door to implement a stage of a continuation of some practices, a renewed focus and emphasis on others, and the introduction of several new strategies to ensure steady progress and lasting change. Once incorporated, these new strategies will strengthen local relationships and improve the chances of peaceful partnership over both the short and long-term.

Three additional strategies which are vital for effective conflict mitigation and peace building are as follows: a facilitated course of action to address grieving/mourning, a formalized reconciliation process, and a structured efficacy building program. These

methods work as a combined approach, and will prove especially effective when administered as an integrated part of the ongoing UNDP Communities Program. Along with other advantages, these additional assets to the program will help to address communal insecurity, issues of powerlessness and victimization, and go further in addressing the needs of women and youth in supporting the family unit and communal framework.

It is the intention of this report to provide an overview of conditions as they currently exist, to explore and inform readership more deeply on the subjects of conflict and reconciliation, and to offer useful recommendations and questions for action and further consideration.

INDICATORS OF IMPENDING INSTABILITY/CONFLICT

- Increase in the number of polygamist households
- Fewer children attending school
- Increase in the number of households headed by females
- Increase in unemployment/underemployment
- Decrease in cross-cultural relationships/partnerships
- Emerging ultra-nationalism
- Emerging political and religious extremism
- Increased reference to heritage exemplifying population as being superior to neighboring populations.
- Increased incidence of deliberate rewriting of history -- population seeing themselves as the archivists of their version of the historical truth of regional events through time.
- Statements by the population finding themselves to be the rightful heirs of historical territories currently outside their boundaries.
- Population sees itself as blameless in recent and historical conflicts.
- The emergence of isolationist policies.
- Evidence that the population believes their problems are primarily external in causality.
- Evidence of widespread resentment against neighboring populations due to the luring away of citizens for reasons of improved quality of life, employment opportunities, and higher salaries.
- Religious fundamentalism tends to be found as collecting in particular communities, rather than individual households
- Lack of independent media
- Threat of physical violence along national borders

- The median age of the population is under 30
- Increasing population density in conflict prone areas
- Border disputes
- Disputes over resource allocation

It should be noted that while these are general indicators, the majority of them do apply in Tajikistan in 2009.

2. REFLECTIONS AND ASSESSMENT

General Information about conflict, its origins, expressions, and its implications in the current and emerging context of Tajikistan .

It is not only war, border disputes, and ideological/political reorganization that causes collective trauma in societies. Natural disasters, crumbling infrastructure, a distrust of authority figures due to suspicions of corruption, insufficient energy access, ongoing risk of food scarcity and unreliable water supplies, limited natural resources, high poverty rates, a perceived lack of government control over the actions of neighboring groups, limited access to/delivery of basic services (such as healthcare, sanitation, etc.), and inaccessible or inadequate independent media resources lead to a heightened state of social anxiety, and deep-seated individual fears. Fear and anxiety are an adaptive response to very real threats.

The resulting emotions cause groups of people to be motivated to take action that is intended to resolve the cause of the angst and restore a sense of safety and equilibrium to the community. Yet, threats to social safety often come in a series of events compounding the risk and complicating the options for resolution. At present, Tajikistan not only suffers from all of the social anxiety instigators above, but also has in recent years experienced the dissolution of its former Russian political/ideological personification, suffered a civil war with tremendous loss of life, and endured tumultuous border disputes that continue to this day. The psychosocial effects of the recent upheavals, multiple social anxiety inducing conditions, and the pressure of the on-going stress of day-to-day living leaves communities and their families emotionally exhausted, psychologically apprehensive, and especially vulnerable to internal and external conflict triggers (*See indicators of impending instability/conflict in Section 1.*)

Once the most immediate humanitarian needs are met following a traumatic event (emergency supplies of food, drinking water, basic sanitation, hygiene kits, etc.), the focus of assistance and development organizations can shift to early response projects. Conflict mitigation and reconciliation are an essential element of these projects, and are

often the mechanism through which the most vulnerable populations are exposed to the basic tenets of peace building. Before examining how populations can move into the process of healing and recovery necessary for true reconciliation, it is necessary to explore conflict and the way in which it affects people and societies more intensively.

Social divisions caused by the dissolution of political borders and ideologies, civil wars, and ethnic conflict are shared experiences internalized by individuals. Human beings are shaped by their experiences and unduly stressful experiences transform the very biology of the human brain. Large-scale post-traumatic stress disorders affect the regulation of emotions resulting in changes in thinking and behavior, for instance: poor self perception, altered/unhealthy perception of real or imagined perpetrators, difficulty maintaining relations with others, changes in mood, indications of depression, changes in the perceived meaning of daily events and how they are interpreted.

CONFLICT, IDENTITY AND LINKING OBJECTS

During times of border instability, ethnic and civil clashes, individuals seek ways to make themselves feel safe. Often ideological and religious groups will break down into distinct subgroups. Leaders of these groups can be interested in keeping the conflict alive for reasons of gaining power through an oppositional stance, and do so by continuing to activate the memory of past frictions and pronouncing strong attachment to victims past and present. For those who have been traumatized it is easy in their mental representations to glorify victims' accounts even tying them to their respective histories. This practice leads to a preoccupation of division and opposition causing groups and individuals greater instability around issues of identity.

Rather than pull one another up through communal optimism, communities of collectively distressed individuals keep the trauma alive as a form of protection against the unpredictability of future. Long term exposures to stressors, whether they are social, political, economic, or associational, all lead to the breakdown of social fabric of communal and familial structures. **Man-made trauma induces feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, victimization, shame, humiliation, powerlessness, a mentality of blame, and potent expectations.**

Disasters at the hands of others are felt differently from natural disasters in that they generate problems with large group identity issues, in other words, they spark an "us" versus "them" mentality. In what is known as "disaster diplomacy," natural disasters frequently result in at least short-term bonding between disparate groups. Even those considered traditional enemies are likely to come to one another's aid during times of earthquake, flood, and other widespread life-threatening catastrophes. For example, on

December 24, 2004 Indonesian separatists called a cease-fire after the Tsunami and the central government loosened its restrictions allowing aid to flow through the country creating a more open atmosphere culminating in the first dialogue for peace in nearly 10 years. There was a similar instance between Greece and Turkey following an earthquake in 1999. These shared reaction formations offer unique opportunities for people to recognize the humanity of one another and come together to make progress toward peace. And, further demonstrates how flexible communities can be in their responses to disaster, depending upon how they come about.

Conversely, any group/community that has suffered at the hands of, or through the actions of, another group experiences feelings of shame, victimization, and helplessness. When a group feels unable to redress committed wrongs against them by way of societal norms and accepted social processes -- government action, local mediation via counsels of elders, courts, etc. -- anger grows and is often internalized where it festers and develops into aggression which grows and spreads with every telling and retelling of the un-rectified incident, and can lead to the ignition of societal conflict.

Shame and humiliation perpetrated at the hands of other groups alters group identity, i.e. the way that they now see themselves and others is changed. Assault in one region is automatically felt throughout the entire society. This is especially true when natural resources such as land and water access are seized. In rural areas, social identity is closely tied to environment. Rivers, springs, pastures, forests, and mountain ranges are powerful "linking objects" meaning that they are inseparably melded into a society's perception of itself. In these cases, the linking object is understood as part of the society, and the members of that society find themselves intellectually and emotionally unable to recognize their identity as a group if separated from the object. To their society, their environment and their society are seen as being one and the same.

Groups who are suffering a sense of degradation at the hands of another group will often reactivate "we-ness" by encouraging cultural customs, restoring traditional rites and rituals and in some cases, a resurgence of religious fundamentalism. But internalized anger can lead to a corruption of these traditions, which may begin to be expressed in ways that are socially unhealthy. Communities may also see an increase in petty crimes. Frequently, there is an increase in arguments among neighbors and extended families as a way of the deflecting the resentment that they have toward those causing the external conflict, against whom they have no way of expressing their indignation.

This inability to be able to obtain what they see as justice from the perpetrators of conflict, leads to the sense of powerlessness. These feelings are particularly damaging to the men of the population who feel a responsibility to protect the rights and property of their families. In cases of massive trauma at the hands of an enemy, unfinished psychological processes are generalized by the social sharing of the experience, and passed on to the next generation. This process is called trans-generational transmission of trauma, and is responsible for the continuation of conflict over years, and decades, and sometimes centuries.

In every instance, chaos at the hands of others either within, or outside a national population leads to a generalized response of massive trauma, tearing apart the tissues the social fabric. Bonds that traditionally linked people disappear; relationships are disrupted. The sense of community is broken and there is a loss of security. Interestingly, when the losses are primarily loss of life and not property, healing takes place more readily and more completely. Social relationships are more likely to regenerate. People are able to recover socially because they recognize shared pain, which can result in mutual understanding and, over time, forgiveness; and ultimately, healing.

Group identity of any collective that is shaped by conflict cannot exist without them having collectively created a group identity of their "foes." The dynamics of conflict continue to respond to a perception of the "other" that may or may not have any basis in fact. Mental and emotional images are assimilated and shared within the population over time while any actual changes from this picture of their oppressors is ignored. The ignoring is largely unintentional; the traumatized communities are literally affected by a trauma induced blind spot.

This is especially problematic in civil wars or in border wars when the populations on each side have tremendous cultural and historical similarities, because both groups share so many behaviors, connected property, similar livelihoods and modes of living. Hating the "other" and all their ways very often becomes confusing especially to the youth. Each side tries to disassociate with anyone or anything that shows them in similarity.

Changes in psychological markers identify changes in a specific group; a common example is that of communities becoming ultra nationalistic, as a way to differentiate themselves from those who are or have initiated conflict. They will seek differences that are ethnic, nationalistic, religious, ideological with deliberate design to demonstrate themselves as separate and superior. In instances of deadly action, civil wars for

example, the opposing sides use this differentiation of identity to diminish one another. When one group fails to see another group as human they provide their combat in the license to rob, maim, or kill without guilt. Although natural disasters kill large numbers of people, they cannot shame or humiliate. If one region is affected by a flood, this will remain a regional trauma but generally the population does not suffer from the level of helplessness and grief associated with social conflict. The trauma is not on as large a scale, nor does it continue over as long a period of time.

When the possession of environmental resources are disputed, it can initiate the most intractable forms of civil/social conflict (consider the Palestinian/Israeli impasse). Because disputes over territory are actually affecting each society's individual identity, the "losing" side -- the one which has been separated from the territory/resources it believes are part of its social and cultural legacy - experiences humiliation and rage. These intense feelings lead to a desire to exact revenge by somehow humiliating the other group, usually by taking something that belongs to them, in an effort to restore a sense of balance through "justifiable" retribution. When large groups find themselves unable to take revenge, the ensuing internalized aggression frequently spills-over into domestic violence, and lashing out at one's own government for failing to protect them through civil unrest.

Long periods of tension between two groups will often cause them to be sensitive to even the slightest hint of what could be considered an insult which can inflame relations. Feelings of victimization can be awakened from their dormancy, by accident or intentionally, even after decades or hundreds of years, as was seen in Serbia mourning the loss over a battle fought in Kosovo over 600 years ago.

FORMALIZED RECONCILIATION

When the group feels humiliated and in addition feels helpless to respond, they are not able to move through the mourning process. For complete recovery, participation in a formalized reconciliation process is required. Mediation requires neutrality, objectiveness, impartiality playing a vital role in reconciliation dialogue. By bringing in a 3rd party with the appropriate training, the hard work of true reconciliation can begin.

There is a need to move past passivity, to be assertive, and to express their feelings to those whom they consider perpetrators in order to reverse the sense of shame that they are experiencing. The history of conflict and tragedy is complicated and sorting it out is best done carefully with the inclusion of third parties who are neutral. While this is being accomplished shared experiences and findings

should be explored gently and slowly to create the time and space for empathetic communication. Strategies must be developed to help victimized group through the mourning process which will help temper the feelings of revenge. By sharing their experiences openly, communities gain an increased sense of optimism for peaceful coexistence.

There is inherent danger within any nation with a population that has a median age under 30 years; this is particularly true in instances where the primary decision-making is left in the hands of males alone. In Tajikistan, the median age is 21. Sustainability of cooperation in terms of natural resources, etc. depends upon how much each person values the future relative to the present. Individual decision-makers, especially males in their early 20s, are largely unable to make well-reasoned decisions regarding the future. Many young men prefer to fight rather than negotiate as a way to identify with their fathers, demonstrate that they can protect their mothers, or to seek status. As a group, their overall lack of experience and intense interest in the present over the future leave them ill-equipped to contribute to, and take advantage of, essential long-term planning for their communities. Neither do they have the ability to catalyze consensus, identify priorities, emphasize shared needs, manage expectations, or determine mutual drivers. When these roles are left to only a few in the community, and the majority of the population is made up of young males expected to follow the example, the community is at a significant disadvantage. Youth will always desire to be in charge of something, to have some sense of control. This dynamic must be thoroughly understood carefully addressed.

As part of this process, the political atmosphere on the community and district level must be organized in such a way that victims and victimizers, male and female, young and old, have a mechanism and rationalization for relating to one another.

FORGIVENESS AS A PART OF RECONCILIATION

Useful questions include: Is forgiveness of this sort best when conducted as a civil process? Should/would religious leaders need or want to be involved? According to the communities involved, when is it "over?" When has conflicts finished and healing begun? How can reconciliation progress be measured?

In group reconciliation, silence is regarded differently by different parties. Certain behaviors are required to maintain prestige. "Rational" win-win facilitation styles should be avoided. Genuine empathy takes probing, discomfort, and time. Describing and even naming of the tragedy is pivotal. It is necessary to move gently and slowly.

Members need to really "hear" one another. Facilitators must resist the urge to turn these conferences into bargaining sessions. Better, informal models bring together elders and communal historians from both sides and support joint archival discussions to be presented. These topics carry a tremendous emotional charge; there is healing through respectful, heartfelt dialogue and a willingness to "agree to disagree." The value of these exchanges is not to change anyone's mind or to convince anyone that they are wrong, but simply for each party to know that they have been heard by the other side.

THE NECESSITY OF MOURNING

Reconciliation is about coming to terms with conditions that have changed. In instances where conflict has been noninvasive, infrequent, brief, and the population has a strong social framework without complicating stressors such as unemployment, inhibited access to resources, etc., the subsequent grieving is ordinarily short and personal, and this is enough for social healing. On the other hand, in communities where multiple social anxiety stressors have been impacting the population over long periods of time, people have the need to deal with their grief in a more rigorous way order to fully recover.

Recovery is about healing. Without mourning there can be no healing. Facilitation courses that include grief counseling and techniques to aid in healthy mourning are tremendously helpful in giving community members in understanding of their pain and the healing process of themselves and their loved ones. Individuals need to be allowed to be angry. Individuals who are feeling frustrated and angry need to be allowed to tell their story without being criticized. This type of guidance introduces the first steps necessary for forgiveness, and helps community members to identify what is it that they need in order to feel safe again.

The loss of historical lands and access to resources necessary for livelihood can be as painful as the loss of loved ones. The grieving can be more protracted and take tremendous commitment to achieve the peace of mind needed to move forward. The loss of family members and friends requires a broad-based understanding of the relationships that have been lost, and the consequences to those left behind.

After conflict, surviving males often leave their shattered community to find work. This changes the family dynamic. Women and children already traumatized are left on their own. Women are often forced to take over their husband's role at home including

discipline, paying bills, and producing income to survive. Husbands experience a sense of security while at work elsewhere. While away, he idealizes his home, but he returns to the reality of a troubled place and a changed relationship with his wife, none of which fits into the cultural norms that make him feel comfortable. Family relations are strained, and often destroyed. These men regularly find women elsewhere without the painful associations connected with the family and place they left behind. The abandoned family members then experience their own additional grief and pain with which they need support and assistance.

In other situations, widowed mothers often have trouble giving love and holding healthy relationships with the children of their dead spouse, so these children lose their fathers physically and emotionally lose much of their mothers. The sons often engage in risky behaviors and wish to fight in wars to honor their fathers; i.e. live up to the image that they have created of the hero father figure they have in mind. Daughters of widows have fears of getting close to men emotionally in fear that they will be abandoned or that the men in their lives will certainly die re-creating the sense of loss and helplessness that they have experienced in the past.

Children of fathers killed in war are forever connected to a painful historical event. They idealize the memory of the father as the hero and hang onto this designation as it makes them feel special. Widows and other family members and friends of the deceased treat the children as living linking objects. People deny anything negative about the person who died in conflict and re-create them in a glorious image. Having material items, such as photos, letters, metals, etc. make it easier to create a real man and properly mourn his loss.

The loss of a paternal figure who disappeared during a fight is particularly difficult to recover from. Stepparents can help by being there to aid in the negotiation of the developmental passages from childhood to youth, to adulthood. Youngsters adapt better when they can speak to others who fought with their father/uncle/brother/grandfather and can clear away any mythology about how they lived and died.

OFFERING/OBTAINING FORGIVENESS AS PART OF MOURNING

The process of peace building requires forgiveness. An expert with the background in the field should be brought in as a part of the reconciliation/mourning process. Reaching the point at which forgiveness can be offered and accepted takes time, but without it, healing is incomplete and conflict likely to reignite an ongoing cycle of dispute and violence.

Apology and forgiveness vary greatly from culture to culture, tribe to tribe, clan to clan. When is it appropriate? When is it seen as too soon? When is it considered to be too late? In preliminary discussions geared toward apology and forgiveness, what are perceived to be the motivations to apologize, or decision to forgive? On what does willingness to forgive depend? What are the regional and religious traditions regarding forgiveness?

Discussions on the subject must include who should be chosen to speak for each side? Should it be more than one person? Who should begin, what should his/her role entail? What position/title should this person hold? Where should an official offer and acceptance of forgiveness take place? In the civic center? On a former battleground? Memorial site? Neutral ground? A historical site representative of peace between the peoples? When should such an event be held? Should it commemorate a certain event, day or date? Who should be present? Who should be involved? Should it take place behind closed doors? In public? Should it be formal or informal? Should the proceedings be oral only, or include a written component?

MEMORIALS & HEALING

There is great importance on grieving openly. Mourning together via various types of memorial services helps greatly. After losing loved ones or suffering long-term disputes, there is a new reality to which individuals and communities must adapt. If the conflict has also destroyed objects/infrastructure, or lead to the loss of property the process is complex and slow. The joint creation and veneration of appropriate monuments and/or memorials is very useful in healing. They can be used to celebrate a place that symbolizes new beginnings.

Careful consideration into the design of memorials is required. Collaborative design and construction can help to avoid misunderstandings and symbolism which could be interpreted as provocative. It is not the truth of a tragedy that is important to the group, what matters is that by sharing the trauma through a form of remembrance, the communities are linked together. Memorials serve as an identity marker that the groups can share and revisit something that they see as connecting them. Without this type of marker, subsequent generations will often visit hostilities on the descendants of those who they feel victimized their ancestors. In these cases the descendants are acting out revenge against the original perpetrators in a symbolic way to ease their sense of shame and persecution.

Former "hot places" can become particularly helpful memorial sites and while they initially can remain hot and incite violence, over time, these sites cool and these

energies tend to remain contained and softened within its boundaries. When these areas constitute disputed borderlands, a memorial marker can be utilized for the purposes of healing and progress by framing them as cooperative territories. These joint neighborhoods, with their agreed-upon shared obligations and responsibilities, act as buffer zones, and provide both populations a way in which to be reconnected to the heart of their society embodied within the space.

EFFICACY BUILDING

ASSETS INVENTORIES

Concerns over environmental resources, disputes with neighboring communities, and ongoing financial struggles, contribute to the overall sense of victimization suffered by communities in conflict and post-conflict zones. This community sense of weakness, vulnerability, and disadvantage leads to neighboring communities being seen as competitors for resources, rather than partners with whom to cooperate and collaborate.

Developing a healthy sense of communal efficacy is essential to reducing tension and mitigating the threat of local and regional conflict, as well as indispensable to the generation of profitable, reciprocal relationships within and across borders. A reliable method of building a stable foundation for this vital shift is the performance of an assets inventory for the community, and later, as relations improve, the district and region.

It is preferable to have the first inventories conducted with the assistance of an individual who has experience in the process. As many people from the community as possible should participate and contribute to the inventory. Simply being involved can assist in the improvement of efficacy for the community as a whole, and induce improved relationships.

THE POWER OF INFORMATION

Without openly sharing information, a collective may internalize their sense of victimization making it part of their shared identity. This identification with prolonged victimization can cause a group to develop a sense of entitlement for revenge to be reactivated by a vocal leader or conditions that spark the memory of what has come before.

People tend to believe that what they fear is the truth. During times of conflict and social anxiety, people habitually believe that the rumors they hear are true, that dangerous situations they hear about are real, present, and must be defended and guarded against. Gossip that builds from hearsay through an overwrought population can spark aggressive action. Overcoming this response requires an open, independent

media, through which information can flow. Opposing sides will always have differing interpretations of what caused the conflict related events, what transpired, what crimes were committed, who is at fault, and who is to blame. Open dialogue can reduce antagonism and act as unofficial diplomacy.

Open information forums have never been easier to create or utilize. Even the most remote village can be connected to the outside world via the Internet quickly and inexpensively. Community leaders, women's groups, and schoolchildren, can create content, and post information about their interests and their day-to-day lives and invite input and discussion from other groups, such as neighbors across the border, schools, associations, and organizations of interest around the planet. While it is important to educate the population that false information can also be found on the Internet, the sheer volume of open admission to a variety of media, academic, and professional organizational outlets allow even the most secluded populations access to a wealth of information and an opportunity to make up their own minds about what they choose to believe.

3. LIMITATIONS

RESEARCH AND CONSIDERATIONS

Even with months of exhaustive data collection, the research of any topic can never be considered to be entirely complete. Still, in the instance of this study, every effort has been made to locate documents, individuals, and other informational sources related to the topic of conflict mitigation and the UNDP Communities Program of Tajikistan. In each instance, these sources and the resulting data were judiciously analyzed and applicable findings included as part of this report.

It would have been advantageous to have the opportunity to visit more target communities, especially those in the Rasht Valley in order to gain the benefit of first-hand accounts from those local populations. However, in light of time constraints, this drawback has been minimized by the careful scrutiny of numerous documents recording such accounts. Further, it would have been helpful to meet with, and have a one-on-one exchange with UNDP staff members from Kyrgyzstan. Again, while time constraints and difficulties with travel arrangements prevented such an exchange, relevant documents supplied by that office have been thoroughly studied and gleaned for important contributions to this report.

By far, the greatest limitation in terms of the creation of this report is the restriction on time. What has been constructed in a matter of days, would have benefited greatly from an additional month, or two.

4. ASSESSING THE ISSUES

CONFLICT MITIGATION IN ACTION - CROSSCUTTING IN CONTEXT: A THREAD THROUGH THE FABRIC

For strategic purposes in addressing conflict mitigation by way of long-term planning and short-term action, the following is organized by sector. Following each sector heading is information for further understanding, topics for discussion, and in some instances, questions that would be valuable to explore. This section of the report is intended to assist UNDP staff, and communal leadership in devising a sectoral context within which to apply and implement relevant recommendations, which are included in Section 5.

GOVERNANCE

In regions with historical instability, populations look to their communal governments for structure and a sense of stability. While local governments rarely have much control over the larger forces influencing ongoing instability, they can greatly improve local conditions by helping community members understand what factors are within their control, and by helping to manage their expectations.

First and foremost, those in positions of leadership need to discuss and coordinate what types of information should be shared with the community, and how that information should be framed. They need to ensure that their messages are uniform. Area populations that have been experiencing long-term social anxiety generally have difficulty trusting individuals in positions of power and authority. By ensuring that the community is receiving clear, consistent messages on topics of concern, the local administration helps to build trust and confidence.

Secondly, by way of community education, local governance should guarantee that the local population understands what it is and is not capable of achieving on the local level. While interested individuals should be encouraged to learn the process of actively advocating for change through higher levels of government in a productive fashion, the majority of time and energy should be spent encouraging participants to focus on goals that are achievable within and between local communities. This increases the chances of success, and ensures reasonable expectations.

GENDER

The experience of living through, or under the ongoing threat of conflict, especially that which involved or has the potential to involve violence and loss of homelands is known to be perceived differently by women and men. While men tend to experience their feelings of fear as a challenge calling for a forceful response, women tend to experience more intense fear, more helplessness, and a greater sense of desperation associated with the desire to protect themselves and the vulnerable members of their family. In the face of conflict, women are often left on their own whether husbands, fathers, brothers, and older sons leave to fight or find income. They are often ill-equipped to deal with the combined trauma and the increase of daily stresses and loss.

The well-being of mothers or primary caretakers, as well as her fears and fantasies, are passed on to her child's development and sense of self. Adult females who are traumatized by conflict and loss often deal with it by refusing to discuss the experience (loss of livelihood, status, parents, home, property, brothers, husbands, sons, etc.). They do this in an effort to move on and not trouble their family members, but this impedes their recovery, and the recovery of their families. As a result, her children and other young dependents fantasize about what might have happened to their mother, why she changed, and create their own reality about the events that brought this about. They construct their own stories interfering with their ability for understanding and healing.

In situations where a loved one has been lost, or gone missing, related to a conflict, remaining family members, especially children, spend time idealizing and idolizing those who were lost. Children especially will imagine what the expectations of a parental figure might have been, and then try to meet these invented expectations. When they do not feel as though they have lived up to the life they believe they should have lived they feel devalued. In the case of widows and children who have lost family members in conflict, they are often given special status by others as related survivors of heroes. This adds extra pressure on widows and children as they strive to meet not only their own created expectations, but the often unrealistic expectations of others as to how they should behave.

During the transition of shifting roles and responsibilities in the family dynamic, when women first bring in significant income, family violence in terms of abuse often increases temporarily. Males already feeling less empowered often feel threatened by the wife's contributions and seeming independence.

Women depend on their neighbors for assistance with labor-intensive and time-consuming tasks, such as: transporting wood, water, tending to fires and stoves,

cooking, preparation of meals, horticultural tasks, tending to the injured, ill, and infirm, doing laundry, attending to childcare, and medical assistance especially during times surrounding pregnancy, nursing, childbirth. In civil and ethnic conflicts, often friends of the women and children are found to be on the wrong side of the conflict in the eyes of the adult males of the family. This leads to a greater sense of isolation and fewer hands to share domestic and communal tasks usually handled by women and youngsters. This increases the stress on individuals and families, and can lead to resentment within the family toward those enforcing the estrangement from friends. Further, the segregation harms the local economy by interrupting work relationships, trade, and the number and variety of goods available to individual families, as well as the general health and welfare of the community.

In Tajikistan, women cannot inherit property. While widows can have access to a percentage of her deceased husband's assets, ownership of all property goes to the youngest son. In terms of conflict, what are the implications of these laws governing inheritance?

Since independence, there has been an increased frequency of women being abandoned by their husbands. Under these circumstances, what are the rules governing her husband's property and her access to it? What happens to the rights of ownership? After the breakup of the former Soviet Union, Tajik women found their maternity benefits had been cut as a cost saving measure. Similarly, available day care services became much more difficult to find. Equity between the genders is accepted in some areas as being part of the Soviet ideology, while the reversion back to the more traditional roles and divisions of the genders are seen as being true to Tajik heritage, and so is considered by some to be preferable. Fewer females are being sent to school, and of those who are being educated, statistics demonstrate that they are not staying in school as long, and that the quality of education is diminished. Likewise, women and girls are no longer welcome to benefit from the comfort and knowledge once available to them through visiting local mosques. A recent change in legislation now prohibits their entry.

Arranged marriages are still the cultural norm, and the number of polygamous marriages has been growing since independence. While these institutions offer economic advantages and are not in and of themselves customs without merit, they are indicative of societal conditions with restricted female autonomy. Women's options are more limited and their choices and opportunities more restricted. In many rural areas, family planning is not an accepted practice. Moreover, there are not enough health-care workers available to meet the needs of women's special health-care concerns and issues

surrounding childbirth, and rearing. While it is known that anemia and deficiencies of iodine and vitamin D are rampant and particularly dangerous for women and children, these basic supplements are largely unavailable.

TOPICS FOR ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATION RELATED TO GENDER

It is worthwhile to explore the following questions -- what effect does it have on a woman's sense of self to know that she is unable to care for her own body because of the lack of healthcare workers, to know that she does not have the freedom to plan or delay pregnancy, to be forced to accept an inferior position in a polygamist household, to know that she does not have the right of ownership over the land that she works, to know that her education is insufficient to change her fortunes, and to know that she's not welcome to enter a mosque simply because she was born female? How does this affect her ability to contribute as a member of society? How does it affect her ability to be a nurturing and conscientious parent, spouse, daughter/daughter-in-law? What effect does this have on her sons who will move into positions of power and leadership?

Although statistics demonstrate that Tajik women are intelligent, creative and entrepreneurial, registering an average of 20,000 patents in Tajikistan per year, the present conditions contribute to a weakening of the overall economy and an increasingly underutilized, frustrated female population. Moreover, as the inner workings and underpinnings of the recent wars involving extremism have revealed, **the state of mind of young men who choose acts of violence or choose to join extremist groups are deeply influenced and affected by their perceptions of their mother's pain and suffering.** Sons who felt that their mothers had been profoundly hurt, shamed, demeaned, injured, or abandoned, and who lived with a mother who was unwilling or unable to heal from her wounds felt the absolute justification and even the *obligation* to hurt others as a means of retribution. The equation is an ominous one: Mothers' pain = sons' anger, and too often violent action. This is especially true in locations where there is an absence of a strong, mature male presence in the community to rein in the younger males or model more productive ways of dealing with their emotions.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

As has been stated above, environmental resources are very often seen as part of a national or group identity. For this reason, the protection, preservation, administration, and utilization of these resources must be thoughtfully considered, and dealt with attentively. First and foremost, the peoples involved in the disputes over the territory in

question must be engaged and educated on the topic of land-use and resource management as part of their formalized reconciliation dialogue.

It is worth exploring if at least along certain segments of the Tajik border where tensions over water and land access are greatest, whether or not an experimental trial period of a "shared neighborhood" concept might be mutually accepted. A tried-and-true strategy of these types of negotiations is to remind participants that when it comes to finding workable partnerships, experimentation is required. And, that all that either side need to agree to is that *every decision is an interim decision*. In other words, it is understood and accepted by all parties that if this particular arranged configuration does not work, it is not a failure, it simply gives the parties additional information with which to make another decision. And if necessary, another, and another.

Once the basic concepts of 21st-century sustainable environmental resource management are presented and understood by the affected population through community education, a great deal of the tension between the groups, and apprehension which has been driven by a scarcity mentality will be relieved. The population will be comforted and empowered by understanding that they have a certain degree of control over meeting their needs. This combined with the release of pent-up animosity against their neighbors during the reconciliation dialogue will renew and nurture the desire and energy for productive, collaborative resource sharing.

ECONOMY

Fears related to economic stressors are one of the most debilitating handicaps that can be faced by families and communities; and, it is especially crippling when the affected population feels as though they are helpless to significantly improve the situation. Economic stressors affect nearly every aspect of family and communal life. Parents worry about the future for the sake of their children, adult children grow concerned over the well-being of their aging parents, husbands wonder if they can be adequate providers for the needs of wives and relatives, wives worry if they can make the family budget stretch to buy the basics that their families look to them to supply. Families are often forced to make the difficult choice of living apart for extended periods of time, leaving couples without the comfort and support that marriage typically offers. Women are left the enormous task of managing the household and its members emotional and physical needs on their own. Husbands feel the loneliness and guilt of leaving, and the greater guilt, very often, of the relief they experience by being away from the hardships left behind.

On the community level, leaders grow concerned over the needs of those who look to them when times are difficult, often feeling the pressure from district government above, and the families of the villages below. From their vantage point, they watch the youth grow more frustrated, the older generation with their historical experiences more opinionated and demanding, and the extended family relationships becoming more fragmented when remittances are disappointing/absent, husbands find comfort elsewhere, and local resources are too few.

Although the biology is not entirely understood, it is known that anger is generated by fear. In the right conditions, fear can produce intense rage. Fear of not being able to feed one's children, fear of loss of status because you are now unemployed or have lost your husband, fear that your neighbors across the border will deny you access to needed water or fuel or pastureland can easily and rapidly ignite into desperate clashes as people lash-out at anyone and anything that can be seen as connected to their collective misery and sense of powerlessness.

This complex dynamic is so volatile that it has been demonstrated **that if you halve a population's income, you double its chance of war**; and, the lower the income at the outset of the fighting, the longer the conflict. It is imperative, therefore, that economic development and especially projects designed to impact immediate income generation, maintain a top priority in any conflict mitigation strategy.

EDUCATION

Of all the sectors, education is the one within which communities have the most latitude and control. In terms of formalized education, Tajikistan finds itself struggling. Much of what is accepted to be the central government's responsibility, i.e. adequate/well-equipped school buildings, high-quality and affordable student materials, and highly qualified, motivated teachers, is perceived to be lacking. Local communities do have the right to demand evidence from their government officials that steps are being taken to rectify this situation. The proper and most effective approaches to contact government officials and express concerns should be taught through community education courses that are made available to interested adults and all high school students.

It is through informal education that communities derive the greatest benefit and ensure social and economic progress. By utilizing the skills already learned through the participatory planning process, community leaders and interested citizens should identify and prioritize the kinds of courses and training that they feel will benefit their families and communities most. In terms of economic development, international studies strongly suggest the most viable courses for rural populations include computer

usage and foreign language study for youth, and technical assistance related to water management and horticulture for adults. The latter should contain modern, water saving irrigation methods, planting strategies for high-yield on small plots, water recapturing/recycling techniques, best practices regarding the use of the latest seeds and fertilizers, etc.

Other excellent choices include, the creation/marketing of home and small businesses, land use and management practices, the benefits and development of farming associations/and small-business associations, and other technical skills, such as the maintenance of bore-wells, farm equipment, and irrigation systems. Courses and training materials for family health and well-being should also be made available. These can include topics such as: home health care, basic emergency first aid, general information on infectious and childhood diseases, information about immunizations, dental checkups, mental health, childbirth, taking care of the aged, and many others.

Finally, while all education made available at the community level is an advantage to the families who participate and the community as a whole, it is particularly important to encourage as many members of the community as possible to get involved with the facilitated mourning exercises, the structured reconciliation dialogues, and the community assets inventory. The healing of the community will help to restore a positive and optimistic community identity. And, this will provide the foundation for a prosperous and peaceful future.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Statistically, water projects are the most successful in minimizing resource-based conflict; these include joint access to drinking water, the building of small community wells, and communal irrigation projects. By the same token, because conflict mitigation is so inextricably tied to income generation, the development of infrastructure with the intent toward preventing and reducing conflict should ease that which facilitates trade, improves access to markets, shortens travel time to places of employment or income producing activities, and maximizes access to, and utilization of, livelihood enhancing resources. These can include physical structures such as roads, bridges, dams, reservoirs, irrigation systems, wells, market/bazaar stalls, etc.; technical improvements such as computer portals, Internet servers, wireless access systems, and the necessary related equipment; improvements to business dependent services, for example, sanitation services, trash removal, recycling centers -all of which are necessary to recapture and reclaim vital resources which can then be either reutilized or sold.

HEALTH

The relationship between healthy populations and conflict mitigation is fairly straightforward. Without a family income/livelihood that can provide healthful nutrition, without reasonable access to clean air, water, and basic sanitation, and without the provision of nutritional supplements, preventative healthcare, and childhood immunizations, the population as a whole will have a poor quality of life, high maternal and newborn mortality, a weakened workforce, and students/trainees unable to comprehend essential information or execute necessary tasks.

Since the importance of health and well-being is something that everyone in every community agrees upon and is concerned about, practical programs that address basic health education, and explain the underlying causes and straightforward solutions to most maladies are vital. By understanding how to help themselves, their children, and their neighbors, families feel less vulnerable, and are less likely to look for outsiders to blame when illness strikes.

Since most health concerns cross physical and ethnic boundaries, they offer communities another area of commonality from which to join together and seek shared solutions. By working together to replace old, leaking pipes, for example, that are contributing to waterborne illness on both sides of the border, communities can easily put their past frustrations and concerns over water division and rights off to the side, and instead focus on the positive effects gained from working together on a project which will improve the health of their loved ones. Although these strategies require that communities are also working together on their reconciliation process, it should be remembered that projects addressing issues related to health are excellent opportunities for collaboration.

YOUTH

The overall perception is that the educational system in Tajikistan is failing to meet the needs of the country's children and youth. Many teachers have been drawn away to neighboring nations attracted by higher salaries and better working conditions. In addition, the weakening economy has led to more families keeping their children at home to work in the fields or otherwise to be engaged in income producing activities as opposed to going to school. Attendance numbers are dropping, as are the numbers of graduates.

The Tajik culture does not offer a specific event as a coming of age ceremony. It is customary for males to be seen as reaching adulthood once they are married, and for

females, they are not considered to have reached womanhood until the birth of their first child. With many adult males being absent from the community, and no particular ceremony in place to acknowledge young males as having reached manhood, young males are left to make continuous efforts at proving themselves as a way to gain status. Correspondingly, the weakened economy will likely lead to later marriages, and therefore allow young men an extended adolescence. This later entry into adulthood leaves young men without clearly delineated obligations and responsibilities to their families and community, and adds to their sense of powerlessness.

What options can be made available to young men in these communities who are seeking status? What avenues are available to them to gain a sense of respect, and the feeling that they have some degree of control over improving their future and that of their families? In what ways can they be helped on the journey from being a boy to being a man? Working through these questions in an open forum during reconciliation exercises will go a long way toward helping young men know that they are important to the community and that their needs are valued. Females youths should be encouraged to visit the already burgeoning women's associations that are cropping up in their areas to see if they enjoy the experience. Their participation in the mourning process should help give them a greater understanding of their changing wants and needs.

Finally, incorporate youth to play the role of ambassadors for peace; give them courses on advocacy, how to communicate issues, rule of law, etc. They should also have training in how to interact with donor agencies, how to apply for grants, how to develop their own projects to propose to organizations such as globalgiving.com, and sensitivity training to encourage them to work with the most vulnerable groups.

5. FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Lasting peace, economic recovery, and a return to healthy social behaviors requires long-term planning coupled with short term action.

- I. Add additional emphasis to income generation, and community education
- II. Incorporate facilitated processes that address reconciliation, mourning, the development of community assets inventories, and environmental resource management

- III. Streamline tools, reports, and trainings between UNDP offices for the collection and analysis of information
- IV. Create a uniform set of questionnaires which can be utilized throughout the country in order to determine what local leaders are using to define and measure conflict incidents.
- V. Contract with a professional to develop an in-depth intervention strategy for local leadership
- VI. Coordinate future conflict mitigation plans in concert with UNDP Kyrgyzstan.

ADDITIONAL USEFUL CONSIDERATIONS FOR COMMUNITY LEADERS

- ❖ Develop peace building networks by utilizing UNDP volunteer corps
- ❖ Share peace building skills with others: business associations, teaching associations, women's associations, scientific associations, doctors/nurses/midwife associations, and any other profession whose members travel to outlying districts.
- ❖ Teach all interested community members how to work with donors and explain the connection between local projects and conflict mitigation.
- ❖ Teach "pragmatic conciliation and principled confrontation."
- ❖ Teach ways to enlarge the "zone of agreement."
- ❖ Teach the importance of contributions-in-kind, regional bartering banks with small fee going to a community fund, and the use of remittances for local investment
- ❖ Reward social entrepreneurship -- prizes to any individual helping the poor meet their most basic needs
- ❖ Orchestrate the training of nurses and midwives, healthcare workers who can perform home visits
- ❖ Familiarize yourself with conflict mitigation organizations such as Peace Direct
- ❖ Teach local community members how politicians and rebel groups manipulate public relations and media.
- ❖ Teach communities to take interest in the well-being of their neighboring countries, policy, trade, infrastructure, health, etc. Healthy neighbors equal stabilization, and a healthy economy.
- ❖ For the addressing of needs outside their control, teach community advocacy that is positive and constructive, along with what they can expect as outcomes.

- ❖ Train the population for jobs in higher income economies and petition the central government and foreign embassies to cooperate for easy emigration. Use the Philippines as an example.
- ❖ Investigate district-wide recycling with shared equipment costs.
- ❖ Teach that donor agencies are more likely to help across the lines of bordering communities if there are more beneficiaries, if they understand that peace building is an aspect of the project, and if it includes gender relations.
- ❖ Promote forgiveness, rely on cultural/spiritual models from the region.
- ❖ Encourage the best of universal values: altruism, liberty, equality, compassion, kindness, generosity.
- ❖ Help young people understand the difference between vengeance and justice. As Martin Luther King, Jr. said, *“An eye for an eye leaves everyone blind.”*
- ❖ Address powerlessness. Organize assets inventories and add to them regularly; keep communities focused on their goals and help them to develop future projections with simple strategies for steady progress.
- ❖ Teach community members to manage their own public relations and how to participate in the development of media messages. For example how to make the most of the goodwill generated when opposing sides worked together following natural disasters.

CONCLUSIONS

In closing, please find below a few words of wisdom put together by a collection of students who had come to the United States as refugees, excelled through educational scholarships, and then returned home to their own war-ravaged nations. Their focus was conflict mitigation through community education and they now travel to remote targeted communities every week to share what they had learned with people who need to hear it most. At the start of each session, as a reminder to everyone, they hang a poster on the wall with the following inscription:

STEPS TO BREAK PAST OBSTACLES

- There is a just solution and we can find it
- We admit that in the past, both sides have hurt each other
- There are no enemies -- only a response to hurt
- There is hope. The present commitment allows new thinking to come to the surface.

- No future violence negates the cooperation that has or does exist.
- No good comes of domination from one side or the other. Attempts at domination fuel conflict and annul the peace process.
- Peace building must apply thinking based on the painful emotion of the past, but not used as a basis for its foundation.

Their commitment, optimism, and tenacity serve as an example for us all.

SECTION 2

DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS: METHODOLOGY FOR ELABORATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

RECOMMENDED ITEMS, IDEAS, AND OBJECTIVES, FOR INCLUSION:

- 1) Include a demonstrated feedback loop between project outcomes and new project planning
- 2) Utilized a standard format for all data-gathering tools and output delivery documents across departments within UNDP Tajikistan, and UNDP Kyrgyzstan
- 3) Similarly, standardize data analysis methodology
- 4) Outline and standardize questionnaires for prioritization of projects for use at the community level on both sides of the Tajik and Kyrgyz borders
- 5) Create examples of mock timelines to demonstrate how project coordination will flow in real time, and use as a teaching tool for UNDP staff, and local/district leadership
- 6) Subjects such as "rights and responsibilities of all DDP participants" should be collectively decided by communities, facilitated by UNDP staff
- 7) As part of improved transparency, create a "process pipeline" document to be shared so that each community can see where they are/should be and where others in their region are at any given time with regard to project planning, implementation, completion, and evaluation

- 8) Include the recommended "Community Assets Inventory" as described in the 2009 UNDP Peace and Development Report as a model for a district-wide assets inventory. Changes over time in these inventories can be utilized as part of a progress measurement tool.
- 9) Add the identification and development of progress indicators into the "*Main Principles for Elaboration and Implementation of Local Programs.*" These indicators need to be determined on the local level by community participants and local leadership. Subsequent information gathered by the evaluation of progress against these indicators should then be used in the ongoing District Situational Analysis