

## **Rockwool Foundation International Peace Building Programme in Burundi, Uganda and Nepal**

### **Synthesis Note**

The Rockwool Foundation has been funding three peace building projects in Burundi, Nepal, and Uganda respectively. The projects funded were selected based on the degree of innovation and testing of new approaches and methods for peace building. Through this funding the Rockwool Foundation wanted to document best practices, thereby facilitating the possible up-scaling of interventions to a wider range of target groups and implementers. Priority was given to projects that (i) focus on the identification and development of best practice, (ii) include new ideas and innovative approaches, and (iii) use young people and children as catalysts.

The three projects selected were:

- 1) The ADRA Youth for Unity Programme in Burundi
- 2) The Caritas Youth Against Conflict Programme in Uganda
- 3) The RTC/CWIN Youth and Creative Conflict Transformation Project in Nepal

The Rockwool Foundation commissioned Tana Copenhagen to undertake an evaluation of the three projects to document results and lessons learned.<sup>1</sup> This note presents a synthesis of the findings. The full evaluation reports can be found at the Rockwool Foundation website [www.rockwoolfonden.dk](http://www.rockwoolfonden.dk)

### **Methodology**

The projects were subject to a qualitative evaluation based on the OECD-DAC evaluation guidelines and criteria. The evaluation has been based on three categories of data:

- 1) Desk review of documents relating to programme initiation and progress as presented in the project documents and progress reports.
- 2) Desk review of secondary data such as conflict analysis, contextual analysis and socio-economic data as made available through other sources.
- 3) Field data collected during the field mission through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions.

A full overview of the methodology can be found in the evaluation inception report as well as the individual evaluation reports.

### **Theory of Change**

While the three projects have their own trademarks, there are substantive similarities in their objectives, approach and in the theory of change guiding their design as well as their implementation. The three contexts display a history of violence. However, not all conflict is violent and the projects have sought to address some of the root causes of conflict through a conflict transformation approach.

All three projects are based on the assumption that there are substantial conflicts in their local communities and that by engaging youth and mobilising them in groups

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<sup>1</sup> The evaluation was led by Erik Bryld who also undertook the field research in Burundi and Uganda, while Julian Brett undertook the field research in Nepal.

they can act as facilitators for peace, within their group and beyond in society as a whole. And finally, that their success will motivate a further replication of the project activities beyond the immediate target group.

The three programmes have a step-wise approach where first, resourceful youth are identified and trained in conflict identification, mitigation and resolution techniques (also labelled peace building in some of the project documents) related to their own context.<sup>2</sup> These youth then form groups where they train other youths in conflict related skills and engage in community conflict resolution efforts.

To further stimulate a sense of peace building and mitigate or prevent conflict the youth groups are also taught awareness raising activities in their own and neighbouring communities; for example by performing dance, street dramas, and small concerts where youth issues could be raised and the message of peace and conflict transformation could be portrayed.

The youth targeted are older youth who are not in school as well as school children.

By instilling a sense of peace building and conflict resolution in the communities and engaging youth in conflict mitigation and resolution activities the projects aim at building peace in their communities. All three projects have also aimed at seeking replication at a regional level or influencing the national agenda through dialogue with decision-makers and transferring lessons learned to a wider audience.<sup>3</sup>

## **Results**

For all three projects, a major achievement has been the ability to empower the youth as individuals and, more importantly, as a group. There is evidence that the youth<sup>4</sup> have an increased understanding on the drivers and triggers of conflict and basic skills in place to mitigate these.

The extent to which the youth have utilised these skills to actively engage in conflict resolution is very mixed. In Nepal, the youth are more engaged in awareness raising, similarly in Uganda, although they do also solve conflicts internally and in some instances are involved in community related conflict resolution. The most significant results are in Burundi where the youth (in particular the resourceful youth) are engaged in conflict resolution together with the traditional legitimate leadership structures. Here the project has facilitated that youth (male and female) to become part of a process of conflict resolution, which has in the past been dominated by senior male members of society.

The youth in all three countries have learned how to present and discuss knowledge on conflict and conflict mitigation and resolution with a wider audience through dance, drama (street theatre among others), music and radio programmes, and dialogue. In

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<sup>2</sup> In Nepal, the youth groups were already connected to CWIN, the Nepali implementing partner.

<sup>3</sup> In Nepal, for example, the project made extensive use of FM radio and, to a lesser extent, television to reach audiences that could not participate directly.

<sup>4</sup> In particular out of school youth or youth from secondary schools and less so primary school children.

all countries these events established a basis for further discussing conflict and an enhanced understanding of this in the community. The extent to which this has reduced conflict is less evident. Having said this, the communities, and in particular the youth, have become more aware of conflict triggers, which may limit local level conflicts in the future. Furthermore, the social capital generated in the youth groups is likely to limit youth's interest and willingness to contribute to conflict escalations in the future. In Nepal, these effects could likely have been multiplied through further outreach, training and advocacy/awareness raising in adjacent communities so that the positive effects could be disseminated more broadly.

The degree of replication of the projects (a target of the Uganda and Burundi projects) or impacting the national level (a target of the Nepal project) through the adoption of lessons learned by a wider audience outside the remit of the project and the immediate project partners is limited.<sup>5</sup> This is partly a consequence of the short implementation time frame.

#### Unintended positive effects

A major achievement of all three projects is the substantial social capital generated in the youth peace building groups. In all three countries the youth targeted have become more united and knowledgeable of their ability to engage in joint activities, which can improve their situation. The youth have used this social capital to engage in activities, which were not immediately identified as outputs or objectives in the programme documents, but which non-the-less have improved their own situation. Furthermore, the youth groups benefitting directly from the projects act as positive role models, which has a positive effect on stereotypes and the perceptions of other youth.

In Nepal, the skills developed have improved the employment opportunities for the youth, while in Uganda and, most of all, in Burundi, the youth use their groups to engage in savings and credit schemes and joint agricultural activities. In all three countries, livelihoods were identified as the most pressing needs of the youth. Through the youth mobilisation processes the projects have given the youth the tools to actively engage in activities, which improves their situation.

The projects were, by and large, not geared for these additional, unintended but positive effects, which pose questions of the sustainability of these achievements.

#### Innovations

Undertaking community mobilisation efforts and engaging youth through community type groups do not in itself constitute an innovative approach. However, there are elements of innovation, which stand out and have contributed positively to achieving the programme results. These include:

- 1) The decision to single out more resourceful youth members as drivers of change, group formation and learning processes. Targeting existing resourceful

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<sup>5</sup> In Nepal, the final dialogue sessions were held at national level with political and youth leaders and resulted in agreement on a 10 point declaration emphasising the potential role of youth in national peace building and development. This provides a basis for further advocacy at national level. The possible outcome of this process is still to materialise.

persons are often disregarded in development as the focus is strictly on the poorest sections of society. However, by engaging the more resourceful youth and motivating these to lead change, the projects have been able to use these as catalysts for bringing the less resourceful into the projects.

- 2) Taking the youth to retreats with training away from home (but still in their immediate environment), the youth have been able to focus and learn without undue interference. The evaluation team notes that the ADRA project which has used most resources at the initial stages on training, awareness raising and practicing conflict mitigation and resolution, is also the most effective in generating social capital and engaging in conflict resolution.
- 3) The decision to refrain from providing any direct funding to the groups, and only very limited in-kind contributions such as items for dance and drama, has resulted in substantial ownership among the youth and significantly improved the sustainability of the interventions.
- 4) Finally, where the legitimate authorities have been significantly involved in the process (in Burundi), the degree of youth involvement in conflict resolution is also the greatest, underscoring the importance of working with and through existing local level institutions where feasible.

### **Assumptions and context**

The mixed results of the projects vis-à-vis peace building are arguably a consequence of the underlying assumptions of the projects and the context in which they have been implemented.

All three projects have been implemented in post-conflict scenarios, where it was assumed that either conflict was rife and that re-escalation of conflict stemming from the community level was a substantial risk or that there were underlying political and social proximate causes of conflict that could be reignited. The evaluation has however found that the conflicts experienced in the communities are generally traditional conflicts related to land and family disputes with no evident link to the major drivers of conflict in the country (related to e.g. ethnicity, caste or cross-nation resource allocations).<sup>6</sup>

For the youth in all three project sites, the challenges related to ensuring a sustainable livelihood or simply getting a job outweighed the current concerns related to security and conflict. Consequently, the youth have diverted their attention towards livelihoods rather than conflict.

The difference in project effectiveness can in part be attributed to the differences in project approach across the three countries. However, the context is equally important. In Burundi the communities are arguably more coherent and have a higher degree of initial social capital at project initiation than is the case in Uganda and Nepal.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, applying the advantages of the ADRA approach in Uganda or Nepal may have further strengthened the results, but it is unlikely that these would be as significant as in Burundi.

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<sup>6</sup> The types of conflicts identified are similar to those in rural communities in setting not exposed to major conflicts in the past.

<sup>7</sup> Arguably, they are furthermore poorer with fewer livelihood opportunities and thus more receptive to new opportunities.

Finally, all three projects suffer from over ambition in terms of changes expected at outcome level as defined in the project documents and the very limited resources and time allocated for implementing the projects. In other words the project designs do not realistically portray and theory of change and results framework which mirrors the actual activities and resources of the project.

### **Reflections on what is a peace building project vis-à-vis the Rockwool Foundation projects**

The focus on the three projects is labelled 'peace building'. No clear definition is made in the Rockwool documents or the three project agreements on the exact meaning of peace building. Definitions are multiple, but the latest accepted definition by the United Nations focus on targeting the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management. Furthermore, the UN states that peace building strategies must be coherent and tailored to the specific needs of the country concerned, based on national ownership.<sup>8</sup> The UN definition reflects the international community's focus on conflict prevention, mitigation and resolution specifically rather than the more diffuse term peace building.

Promoting peace should thus focus on the capacities of conflict prevention and resolution capacities where there is a risk of lapse or relapse into conflict. While the three projects have focused on building the capacities of the local communities in these fields, the extent to which this will have a major effect on a potential lapse or relapse into conflict is more questionable given the limited impact these communities have on the greater conflict. The three projects are targeting areas, which have been marred by conflict in the past, but the conflicts are not recent, nor have the target groups themselves been actively involved in the respective violent actions. This does not mean that the projects do not contribute to peace building, but only that their impact is less direct and marked.

Making a difference in terms of peace building with the applied project approach is assessed to be greater if: (1) projects are implemented immediately after the conflict (currently: Afghanistan, Mali or parts of the Democratic Republic of Congo to mention a few), and (2) if the targeted youth have had a more profound role in the conflict (e.g. ex-combatants; leaders of political youth wings; or, victims of conflict). In the three cases examined, the projects have been implemented in contexts that demonstrate more obvious development needs, albeit with some underlying fragility that warrants conflict sensitivity.

### **Recommendations for the Rockwool Foundation**

Immediate recommendations for the three projects:

- The three projects have been implemented in a very short time-frame and all three of them will need adaptation of a gradual exit strategy to ensure that the outputs and outcomes achieved will remain sustainable. The funding should be allocated against a clear exit strategy.

Recommendations of funding to future peace building projects:

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<sup>8</sup> UN Secretary General Policy Committee 2007. See also UN Peace building Support Office (2010): *UN Peace building: an Orientation*.

- Continue to build on the innovative elements of the three projects, which have proven effective against the project objectives.
- There is a need for enhanced realism on objectives and indicators in light of the funding provided and time allocated to implement the projects. Changes in cultural practices and attitude takes time. The project design thus needs to reflect a more realistic theory of change.
- Future projects should more explicitly recognise the drivers of conflict and target youth who themselves influence or are directly influenced by violent conflict, which is linked to the larger conflict in the are/country.
- Engage in areas/countries with on-going or in more recent post-conflict scenarios.

Recommendations for future evaluations of Rockwool Foundation peace building projects:

- The three projects have been subject to a qualitative evaluation, which is relevant given the complex context and the weaknesses in the current project design, where objectives and indicators will not allow for a meaningful quantitative analysis. It is challenging, but not impossible, to design project documents and indicators, which will allow for impact evaluations using randomized control trials (RCT). The team suggests, that the Rockwool Foundation engages more substantially in the project design to ensure that the projects may become subject to RCTs. However, the team also stress the need to follow-up RCT with more in-depth qualitative analysis to fully understand the drivers of change.