The owl and the dove: knowledge strategies to improve the peacebuilding practice of local non-governmental organisations
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Chapter 7. Running a global network

The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict

7.1 Introduction

In order to further illustrate the dynamics of knowledge processes in which staff members of local peace NGOs participate, and highlight in particular the role of global knowledge networks and other international, or external, initiatives that aim to support the learning of Southern peacebuilders, Part Three provides two case studies. The first case study, in this chapter, analyses a global network of peacebuilders, the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict. The second case study, in the next chapter, examines an international action learning Master programme that is offered to peace practitioners in several conflict-affected regions in the world: the Applied Conflict Transformation Studies (ACTS) programme. The case studies show some of the dilemmas of global cooperation to support local learning in the peacebuilding field, in order to provide answers to the questions posed at the end of Part Two.

This chapter analyses a global civil society network of peacebuilding organisations. In doing so the chapter contributes further to answering the first and second question posed at the end of Part Two - Given the structural realities in which they operate, what initiatives are undertaken to improve the learning processes of local peace NGOs? What can we learn from these initiatives? To what extent do they facilitate cross-cultural, ‘third-order’ learning? An international network is one type of initiative undertaken by peace NGOs to facilitate learning and exchange and to deal with larger global issues and inequalities that single organisations cannot address. Thus, most directly this chapter sheds light on the fourth question: How can global networks support the knowledge and learning strategies of Southern peace NGOs, thereby increasing their agency? As the network described is facilitated by a Netherlands-based NGO, the chapter also sheds light on the third question - How can international/external/Northern actors support the knowledge and learning strategies of Southern peace NGOs, thereby increasing their agency?

In this section, I first introduce the network and the way it has developed in section 7.1.1, and then explain the approach that has been taken in

317 In a different version, this chapter was published in Verkoren 2006b.
carrying out the case study reflected in this chapter in section 7.1.2. There, I will also outline the rest of the chapter.

7.1.1 The global partnership

The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) is a worldwide network consisting of civil society organisations working in the field of conflict prevention and peacebuilding. It was initiated by the Netherlands-based organisation European Centre for Conflict Prevention (ECCP) in response to a call by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan in his Report on Prevention of Armed Conflict (Annan 2001) in which he urged “NGOs with an interest in conflict prevention to organise an international conference of local, national and international NGOs on their role in conflict prevention and future interaction with the United Nations in this field.”

Annan supported the ensuing proposal of ECCP for the formation of a Global Partnership which would work towards a common action agenda and a global civil society conference on conflict prevention. In a letter written in 2002 the Secretary-General stated that

“I support wholeheartedly your initiative to organize regional preparatory meetings leading to an international conference of local, national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the area of conflict prevention [...] Your initiative is a timely and important contribution to engaging civil society in the task of developing a culture of prevention in the international community.”

(Annan 2002)

The Global Partnership was organised into fifteen regional networks, each with a Regional Initiator or lead organisation, also called Regional Secretariat, steering the regional process of network-building. The global process is led by the International Steering Group (ISG), composed of Regional Initiators, a number of representatives of international NGOs and the GPPAC International Secretariat. The ISG meets twice a year. From its midst an Executive Committee has been selected which deals with the governance of the network in between meetings. ECCP acts as the International Secretariat of the Global partnership. The Regional Initiators brought together conflict prevention and peacebuilding organisations in their regions and formed Regional Steering Groups (RSGs) with representatives from the various countries. Each region went on to organise a conference with civil society representatives and, in most cases, government actors. These
conferences formulated Regional Action Agendas, which in turn served as the foundation for GPPAC’s Global Action Agenda of 2005.

The Global Action Agenda focuses on promoting human security and making a shift from reaction to prevention through effective partnerships, with guiding principles and values that should be at the core of practice. It gives recommendations for addressing the conditions that give rise to violent conflict and for systems and practices to respond to it more effectively if it emerges. The Global Action Agenda concludes with suggestions for specific mechanisms, activities and resources needed to enhance the capacities of civil society organisations (CSOs)\(^{318}\), governments, the UN and regional organisations to pursue prevention and build more just and peaceful societies. The Global Action Agenda served as an input for the Global Conference on the Role of Civil Society in the Prevention of Armed Conflict which took place at UN Headquarters in New York from 19 to 21 July 2005, in response to the initial call made by Kofi Annan in 2001. The conference brought together over 900 people from 118 countries to launch an international civil society movement to prevent armed conflict. It was a remarkable achievement and sent an important signal, even though participation by UN representatives was much more limited than had been hoped.

The global conference and the process leading up to it gave many CSOs around the world an important boost; it was inspiring and valuable to be part of such a joint process through which CSOs hoped to be able to make a lasting impact on global policy and practice. CSO staff also gained useful contacts and knowledge about conflict prevention and the work of others in the field. However, after the global conference many people were left with a feeling of ‘now what?’. ECCP had managed to raise funds from many different sources for the process leading up to the conference, but these were beginning to run out. People felt it was time to begin implementing the Action Agendas, but were not sure where to start and how to find the necessary funds. Six months after the conference, many people involved felt that the momentum that had been so strongly felt in the run-up to the global conference had been lost. Since then, the Global Partnership has taken important steps, most notably with the development of regional and global work plans. Engagement with the UN has continued, and on behalf of GPPAC ECCP has been involved in activities such as the process around the creation and implementation of the UN Peacebuilding Commission. Despite these steps, there is a sense within the network that it needs

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\(^{318}\) GPPAC uses the term CSOs rather than NGOs to make clear that its membership covers a broader range of organisational types. See section 1.1 of this study for an elaboration of both terms.
further strengthening in order for it to be able to start implementing the plans and making a real contribution to the prevention of armed conflicts worldwide.

7.1.2 The network strengthening review

It was felt within GPPAC that the needed process of network strengthening would include activities like building the capacities of the Global Partnership and its regional networks to raise funds, create a better structure, increase skills and knowledge of networking, lobby and advocacy, document work, exchange experience and gain muscle for civil society through joint action and coordination. In order to establish a base-line for this strengthening process and gather the views of network members about the needs and priorities for that process, GPPAC’s ISG and International Secretariat (hosted by ECCP) commissioned a ‘network strengthening review’ of GPPAC and its regional networks, which I carried out. This chapter reflects the findings of this review. It was carried out through a combination of surveys, interviews, discussions, and a literature study. The review aimed:

- to collect and share lessons learned and best practices on network strengthening
- to gather views about the state of the global and regional GPPAC networks
- to gather views about the best ways to strengthen the global and regional GPPAC networks
- in a participatory way, to arrive at recommendations to strengthen the global network and the regional networks
- to improve the structure and transparency of the Global Partnership, and the legitimacy of its representation
- to improve networking within the Global Partnership
- to improve the support of International Secretariat to the regional networks.

The review was carried out through a combination of a survey sent to people involved in GPPAC around the world, a literature study, and a number of case studies of regional GPPAC networks. The network strengthening review consisted of five main elements:

1. a compilation of relevant theory on networking and of information on the functioning of other networks

319 Most of the findings of that literature study have been integrated into the previous chapter (chapter six) on networking. Combined with general networking lessons formulated by people interviewed and surveyed for the PhD research and the GPPAC review, they led to the formulation
2. conversations with the staff of ECCP (the International Secretariat)
3. a survey sent to all people and organisations involved directly or indirectly in GPPAC worldwide
4. case studies of four regional GPPAC networks
5. collecting ideas during networking seminar

A number of members of the ISG participated in the development of the network strengthening review’s terms of reference, planning, and questionnaires during and after the ISG meeting in Nairobi in March 2006. In addition, a wide discussion on an interim version of this paper took place during a seminar on networking that was organised by the International Secretariat of GPPAC. In this seminar, all members of the International Steering Group plus about twenty other experts participated.

A written survey was developed in close consultation with the International Secretariat, in two versions: version A for people directly involved in GPPAC, and version B for people indirectly involved. It was sent to 623 people around the world. 199 surveys were returned. The minimum response of 25% was achieved for most regions. The statistics for each region are depicted in Annex 1. Excerpts from the global survey report have been included in Annex 2. The complete global survey report can be found in the network review report produced for ECCP (Verkoren 2006b).

In addition to the global survey, case studies of four regional GPPAC networks were undertaken. The case studies consisted of interviews held during visits to Central and East Africa, West Africa, Southeast

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320 Two regions did not meet the threshold of 25 per cent of the surveys returned: Southeast Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean. In Southeast Asia 24 per cent of the surveys were returned, which is very close to the threshold. In addition, 29 people were interviewed in this region as part of the case study. In Latin America and the Caribbean only two out of 87 surveys were returned. These two surveys cannot be assumed to be representative of the larger population of GPPAC members in this region. However, other information about the regional network has been consulted, notably the preliminary report of an evaluation that was carried out on behalf of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) of a programme of the organisation Coordinadora Regional de Investigaciones Económicas y Sociales (CRIIES), the GPPAC Regional Initiator for Latin America and the Caribbean. The evaluated programme, “The Role of Civil Society in the Prevention of Armed and/or Violent Conflict in Latin America and the Caribbean”, is essentially GPPAC Latin America and the Caribbean.

321 These were selected by the ISG and International Secretariat, using the following criteria: regional spread; the need to include both longer-established and newly created networks; and criterion that the regional and national initiators in the regions selected had to be willing to assist in receiving researchers and in finding and guiding local researchers.
Asia, and Central Asia\(^{322}\). In the case of Central and East Africa, the results of an earlier evaluation, which I had also carried out\(^{323}\), were used and complemented by a telephone interview with the regional initiator. In West Africa and Southeast Asia, the case study research for the GPPAC review was combined with research visits for the PhD more generally. Only in the case of Central Asia a separate trip was undertaken especially for the GPPAC review. As part of each case study, two countries per region were visited, one being the country in which the regional initiator is based. Interviews were held with the regional initiators, regional steering group members in two countries, and others directly or indirectly involved in GPPAC.

This chapter presents the main findings of the survey and of the conversations held with people involved in the network. Section 7.2 discusses the main functions of GPPAC, as seen by its member organisations. From the next section onwards, the findings of the review are related to the success factors that were introduced in chapter six (section 6.4). 7.3 starts by looking at the characteristics of GPPAC members, such as their organisational capacity and the time and priority they are able to give to the network. In connection to this, 7.4 looks at the way the members relate to the Global Partnership. This includes the extent to which they are committed to it and the added value which the network brings to them. Moving on to the network itself, 7.5 addresses a number of characteristics that affect its functioning, including its flexibility, the level of trust among its members, and its openness to different points of view. 7.6 zooms in on the structure and governance of GPPAC, while the content of the network – the knowledge that is exchanged within it – is discussed in 7.7. In 7.8, the chapter discusses the relationship of GPPAC to its context – to the social and political reality in the regions, for example, and to other organisations and networks in the field. 7.9 addresses the issue of monitoring and evaluation. 7.10 discusses the general implications of the case study for peace networking by NGOs and for the questions around which this study revolves.

\(^{322}\) Initially, two other regions were selected: Latin America and the Caribbean and the Middle East and North Africa. Unfortunately, the Middle East and North Africa case study had to be cancelled due to the war breaking out in Lebanon and Israel. The Latin America and the Caribbean case study, which was to be carried out by a local researcher, remained incomplete.

\(^{323}\) As part of an evaluation of the Dutch Thematic Co-financing (TMF) scheme for the peacebuilding theme, ECCP, the organisation that initiated GPPAC and hosts its secretariat, was evaluated. As part of this evaluation a visit to Kenya was undertaken by the author to interview members of the GPPAC network in Central and East Africa.
7.2 Functions of GPPAC

GPPAC’s main functions as drafted by the ISG are:

1. **Promoting Acceptance of Conflict Prevention**: GPPAC supports regional efforts to raise awareness regarding the effectiveness of conflict prevention, and undertakes parallel efforts at the global level.

2. **Mobilising Civil Society Early Response Actions to Prevent Conflict**: GPPAC supports civil society organisations in developing their capacity to contribute to early warning systems and to intervene effectively in impending crises/conflicts. In response to regional requests, the global network will seek to a) mobilise coordinated civil society responses, based on early warning of impending conflict escalation; and b) pressure governments, regional organisations, and the UN system to respond to early warning information.

3. **Promoting Policies and Structures for Conflict Prevention**: GPPAC generates ideas for improving policies, structures and practices of interaction among civil society organisations, governments, regional organisations, and UN agencies for joint action for conflict prevention.

4. **Building National and Regional Capacity for Prevention**: GPPAC strives to enhance the capacity of its regional networks and global mechanisms to undertake collective actions to prevent violent conflict.

5. **Generating and Disseminating Knowledge**: GPPAC engages in processes of knowledge generation and exchange, by learning from the experience of regions and developing mechanisms for regular communication/exchange of such information. GPPAC activities aim to improve our mutual understanding regarding important methodologies and mechanisms for action. (GPPAC 2006a)

Although all five functions have a clear knowledge component, the last two in particular aim to “support the knowledge and learning strategies of local peace NGOs working in (post)conflict countries”, as one of the research questions with which I started this chapter puts it. During the review, the members of GPPAC in the regions were also asked what the main functions of GPPAC were from their perspective. Survey respondents and interviewees from all regions emphasised that generating and disseminating knowledge constitutes an important function of the network. This includes doing research, gathering other research and information, and disseminating research results and working methods. Respondents said the network should provide its
members with access to experts and expertise, but also facilitate the building of expertise within the members and network, and help bring out the knowledge and experience that exists within the network. In the interviews, various people mentioned that helping members build expertise and wider capacities include helping them gain access to funds and training opportunities. The network may facilitate the linking up of this expertise with policy formulation by donor agencies and international organisations. Related to this, an important function of the network according to its members is to facilitate the exchange of experiences among network members. Such experiences may include lessons learned and best practices. Other participants may learn from the successes and mistakes of colleagues and be inspired by the stories of others.

Another common response across the GPPAC regions was that the Global Partnership and its regional networks should go beyond knowledge sharing and generation alone and engage in collaboration around concrete, joint activities. Collaborative activities varied and suggestions ranged from joint grassroots peacebuilding projects to joint high-level advocacy campaigns and lobby. Given the global reach of the network, the latter are deemed particularly important. Nearly all members consulted during the review felt the network should, in addition to knowledge sharing, focus on high-level engagement to change the framework for conflict prevention and peacebuilding and to make the voice of local civil society heard. The work with the UN (see Box 7.1) is considered particularly relevant. It is also important to link these high-level processes to actors and development at the regional, national and local levels.

**Box 7.1: GPPAC and the UN Peacebuilding Commission**

In discussions of the ISG the UN Peacebuilding Commission emerged as an important issue on which to focus GPPAC’s lobby. One aim is to monitor the start of the commission and its support office. The ISG decided to focus on the link between the UN headquarters and the field, and on the involvement of civil society. Furthermore, GPPAC sees it as a task to develop proposals and updates on situations in countries relevant for the commission and its support office. ECCP, as the international secretariat for GPPAC, plays an active role in coordinating these processes, in the following ways. It has developed a plan together with the World Federalist Movement to conduct several monitoring activities, produce briefing papers and organise seminars. The first seminar took place in July 2006 in New York. The focus of this seminar was on the Peacebuilding Commission’s country-specific working groups and ways to promote their interaction with civil society. Also, the World Federalist Movement has developed, together with New York-based NGOs, a synopsis with recommendations for

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civil society engagement with the Peacebuilding Commission. This input is currently being discussed with people involved in the Commission.

Parallel to this effort in New York, GPPAC’s regional partners are engaged in setting up meetings with key civil society actors in countries selected by the Peacebuilding Commission (Burundi, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Timor-Leste). The aims of these meetings are to discuss recommendations from civil society to the Peacebuilding Commission, and deliver structured input. In Brussels, GPPAC co-organised a seminar with the British NGO SaferWorld in July 2006 on the EU’s contribution to the Peacebuilding Commission. A larger meeting was held in September 2006, involving representatives from the countries selected by the Commission.

7.3 Capacity of the member organisations

In the previous chapter a number of issues were identified that influence the success of networking. With regard to the member organisations these included their organisational capacity, the time they are able to spend on the network, and the extent to which they are linked to domestic constituencies. This section looks at the role these issues play in GPPAC.

7.3.1 Capacity of members and capacity building

Three quarters of the respondents to the survey indicate that they have sufficient capacity to participate meaningfully in the network and to use the results of networking. As evidence they quote having knowledge of and experience with conflict prevention, having the same aim as GPPAC, having experience with networking, and being a network organisation or in some other way being able to mobilise other organisations. Nonetheless, the capacity of participating organisations in GPPAC is a challenge, particularly at the national level. Among the regional networks, the disparity in capacity levels is extreme: “in Latin America, [civil society] can topple governments, while in Uzbekistan, authoritarian regimes more or less stamped out independent activism” (Matveeva and Van der Veen 2005, 8). There is also much variety within regional networks. It is a difficult endeavour to try and bridge the gap between strong and weak network members. Many local peacebuilding organisations have little funding and little trained staff. Some organisations have only just picked up the theme of peacebuilding. Lack of infrastructure (roads, transportation, internet, electricity, high office rents) also represents an obstacle in many places. High staff turnover (see 5.1) is another issue that makes networking difficult, as it jeopardises organisational memory of the member NGOs.
as well as continuity in networking and relationship building among the people participating in network exchanges.

The Regional Secretariats tend to be strong regional players – which is why they were selected. Nonetheless, they struggle to deal with the demands that come with their position at the interface of the global and regional networks. They tend to have too little time and resources to give the coordination of the networks the attention it requires. Both national-level members and the International Secretariat at the global level complain that they receive too few inputs from the regional level. The International Secretariat (ECCP) itself also has limited capacity in terms of staff hours, experience, and resources. ECCP staff say that they find themselves unable to give the regional networks the support they need. The ambitious plans developed by GPPAC at the various levels do not always take sufficient notice of the limits of the capacity of the networks and their members at all levels. A member of the International Secretariat noted that while ECCP and GPPAC advocate a larger role for civil society, CSOs cannot always deliver due to low capacity. “A sober analysis of strengths and weaknesses may be a more effective advocacy tool than an uncritical belief” (Matveeva and Van der Veen 2005: 9).

Another element of organisational capacity is the capacity to learn – including the capacity for research, reflection, monitoring and documentation. Given GPPAC’s focus on knowledge generation, the documentation of knowledge existing within the network (mostly in the form of stories of successful civil society peacebuilding activities) takes place. This is done mainly by ECCP and has resulted in a number of publications. Promoting learning and research skills among the membership and helping members develop M&E procedures receive less priority. Some of the stronger organisations in GPPAC have done quite a bit of work on M&E in connection to learning, while the weaker network members have usually not progressed very far in developing such mechanisms beyond the donor accounting formats they have to fill out.

As a result of the low capacity of many members, strengthening these organisations has emerged as a priority area for GPPAC. As additional capacity needed for organisations to be able to contribute to the network and optimally benefit from it, respondents to the survey as well as case study interviewees most often mentioned training programmes in conflict prevention and peacebuilding methodologies. Expertise and

325 A notable example is NPI-Africa, the organisation acting as the GPPAC Regional Secretariat for Central and East Africa. See 5.4 for some of the procedures they have developed.
methodologies are needed not only when it comes to conflict prevention but also with regard to practical working skills, such as documentation, proposal writing, fundraising, ICT, staff development, and M&E. In addition to skills and knowledge, many organisations say they need financial support, partly in order to be able to travel to network meetings. Due largely to a lack of funding, in most regions GPPAC is not yet providing structural capacity building support. The West African GPPAC network (WANEFP) offers training programmes for national and local CSO staff, but this is an exception. However, GPPAC has contributed to the capacity of its members by providing room for discussion and reflection upon actions. The GPPAC conferences tend to be evaluated positively as opportunities for reflection and exchange.

7.3.2 Time for networking

In order for processes of reflection and exchange to be possible and fruitful, participants need to have time to engage in meaningful exchanges. In line with the general findings of this book, many staff of CSOs involved in GPPAC say they do not have a lot of time to participate in networks. There are some organisations that see networking as part of the toolkit that helps their organisation achieve its mission. For them, GPPAC is not an ‘extra’ activity. Some interviewees emphasise that not only the members themselves, but also their donors need to be convinced to make networking a central activity so that it is not done in extra time, or eats up the overhead budget, but is part of donor grants. For CSOs and donors to prioritise networking and make it part of regular work, they also need to be convinced of its (potential) benefits. As can be read in other sections of this chapter, this is an area in which some work is still needed. Many participants do not yet see concrete benefits and call for more concrete activities. They do not yet ‘own’ the objectives and strategies of the network and feel that more focus is required.

7.3.3 Constituencies

The issue of the limited constituencies of some NGOs (see 1.6.3) also rears its head inside GPPAC, leading one survey respondent to write that “GPPAC is personality-centred rather than socially or politically oriented” (GPPAC 2006c). However, it is also emphasised that in many places the members provide links to various constituencies, including chieftaincy, religious leaders, youth, women, human rights organisations, and the media. More specifically, one may ask about the
extent to which the membership of a network is representative of civil society in the regions in which it operates. During the review many stakeholders raised the issue that GPPAC is not sufficiently linked to the grassroots in the regions. In many regions the network remains limited to a narrow circle around the Regional Initiator. According to International Secretariat staff, there is a tendency among Regional Initiators to protect their position (although it should also be said that in many cases the Regional Initiators are the only organisation around able to carry out such a task). The limited time and resources the Regional Initiators have to spend on the network also play a role, as do personal relations. A lot depends simply on who is available and happens to have heard of GPPAC. In addition, in countries where conditions are particularly difficult it has been hard for GPPAC to find and involve new members.

Another issue that in many member organisations one person (often the director) is involved in GPPAC, rather than the organisation as a whole. Membership is thus not necessarily carried by the whole institution. This became clear during my visit to Cambodia in May 2006. Two Cambodian people participated in GPPAC on behalf of their organisations, which they later left to work elsewhere. When the organisations in question were visited as part of the review, it became clear that their current management had no knowledge of GPPAC at all, even though their organisations were on a list of Cambodian GPPAC members.

7.4 Added value and aims

7.4.1 Added value

Nearly all the people involved in GPPAC see a need for a global and regional civil society network focusing on conflict prevention and peacebuilding. The main reasons they mention include that civil society organisations are stronger together than when they act alone. The conflicts they face cannot be dealt with as individual CSOs. Many conflict issues cross borders. Conflict in one place can have a negative impact on the stability of the region or even the world. As a result, a united, international response is needed, and respondents hope a global network of peace organisations may help facilitate this. Participants hope that the network will unite the strengths of organisations engaging in conflict prevention and increase the voice of civil society as a whole. The latter is needed to bring the issues of participants to the attention of global actors and to achieve successful advocacy and lobby. A large
coalition of CSOs has a stronger position vis-à-vis governments and international organisations. Stakeholders also identify a need for a platform in which to share experiences and learn from others. A network may generate ideas, exchange information and educate people in peace building. It may bring people into contact with each other who could form important partnerships, as is illustrated in Box 7.2 about the Departments of Peace initiative. In addition, a network like GPPAC might help coordinate between the activities of CSOs and facilitate joint projects.

Box 7.2: Departments of Peace initiative and GPPAC

Organisations in the US, the United Kingdom, and Canada started initiatives to have Departments of Peace or Ministries for Peace established that would function alongside existing government Departments. These Departments would operate in the realm of foreign affairs as well as at home. Their work abroad would include monitoring the world scene for signs of conflict and taking pre-emptive measures as appropriate in partnership with other nations and world bodies, helping with the non-violent resolution of conflicts that exist, and assisting with rehabilitation and reconciliation work after the cessation of conflicts. Their work at home would involve fostering a culture of peace at all levels of the community by transforming conflict in the home, the workplace, the school, and in all aspects of government.

In October 2005 three organisations, the US Peace Alliance, the Canadian Federal Working Group for a Department of Peace, and the UK ministry for peace, organised the first People’s Summit for Departments of Peace in London. This was done to share information and experience within existing groups and also to begin working with those considering setting up similar initiatives in other countries. Forty people from twelve countries attended the two day Summit. These countries were Australia, Canada, Israel, the occupied Palestinian territories, Italy, Japan, Spain, the Netherlands, Romania, the United Kingdom, Jordan, and the United States.

As ECCP - the GPPAC International Secretariat – heard about the initiative, it came up with the idea to bring in the expertise and perspective of Departments of Peace that already exist in postconflict countries such as Fiji, the Solomon Islands, Costa Rica, and Liberia. Through the Global Partnership ECCP was able to put the initiators of the Departments of Peace project in touch with relevant people from the countries mentioned. As a result representatives of the existing Departments of Peace attended an international conference on the initiative. ECCP will do research to find out what other similar government departments exist in the world and hopes that a government level network can be created.

By way of illustration, Box 7.3 describes the potential relevance of GPPAC as seen in Central Asia. Similar points were mentioned in other regions as well.

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326 Interview with staff members of ECCP. The Hague, Netherlands, 18 July 2006.
Box 7.3: Relevance of GPPAC for the Central Asian region

Political situation:
- Governments do not act in many instances of local conflicts; NGOs need to act.
- Because of the difficult circumstances for civil society in the region we need international partners.
- Our voice becomes louder if we speak on behalf of a hundred or even a thousand NGOs, making it more likely that our lobby and advocacy efforts are successful.
- Uzbek interviewees emphasised that GPPAC is potentially important for them because “it is connected to the UN institutions”. The UN is respected by the Uzbek government, which does not consider UN agencies to be spies or traitors – as it does other international organisations. GPPAC may get the UN in Uzbekistan to help convince the government that CSOs are important and necessary partners.

Unite strengths and work jointly:
- Central Asian NGOs did not have a culture of cooperating with each other (and with government). Now, thanks to GPPAC, they are thinking more in terms of partnership. People begin to see more possibilities for complementarity and cooperation. The Regional Initiator has begun to use the idea of partnership also in other programmes.
- GPPAC may unite the strengths and resources of the organisations involved and help them to engage in conflict prevention activities in a coordinated or joint way. Now, there is much duplication of activities.
- GPPAC may enable CSOs to jointly address common issues. Globally as well as regionally, conflicts are interrelated and therefore require a joint response. Not only do Central Asian CSOs face similar issues, they also face some of the same issues. Cross-border problems in Central Asia include the conflicts in the Ferghana Valley and religious radicalism.
- A network could decrease competition between NGOs.

Extend reach:
- Because GPPAC is relatively high level it can increase the reach of grassroots networks like Dolina Mira in the Ferghana Valley and help improve their quality.
- A global network may broaden the horizon of CSOs and make their problems known to more people. Interviewees emphasise that is important to get their voices heard, their issues recognised, and their lessons learned by others. They feel they have gained some valuable experiences, for example in the Tajik peace process, that others might benefit from.

Access to knowledge:
- GPPAC may provide access to knowledge and ideas. It could facilitate the generation of new ideas, the exchange of knowledge and contacts, help CSOs keep each other informed about our conflicts, and help them educate themselves in peacebuilding. Networks provide the possibility to combine grassroots experience and knowledge of local conditions on the one hand, and a range of knowledge, information and other resources of global scope. The

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exchange of experience could also mean that strong CSOs support weaker ones in their development.

The extent to which GPPAC actually meets the needs identified in this section, and thus provides the added value it potentially could, varies according to the perspective of the respondent. Overall it can be said that potential of GPPAC to fulfil these needs has been met partly. To the extent that people have gained from the network so far, it tends to be in the area of knowledge sharing. Strikingly, this was the case for each of the regions. For those who feel they have benefited from GPPAC, this has been through access to knowledge and expertise in the field, and the opportunity to exchange experiences with others. In addition, participants have gained contacts and partnerships with others in the field. It is important to know who is doing what and to identify opportunities for cooperation; GPPAC has begun to make this possible. Many people also across regions, add that their membership of GPPAC raises the visibility and legitimacy of their organisations. Particularly in Southeast Asia and Central Asia, members noted that the regional and global networks provide a sense of solidarity and moral support. It is also noted that at the global level, GPPAC has been lobbying to gain recognition for the paradigm of conflict prevention and the role of civil society in this. This has yielded some results (see Box 7.4). Particularly the fact that GPPAC is working to engage the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission (UN PBC) and other UN bodies is considered important by the people who participated in the review.

Box 7.4: Lobby and advocacy achievements at the global level

- A Group of Friends on Conflict Prevention was created though intensive lobbying by ECCP. The group consists of 31 states. It produced an input paper for the Millennium +5 Summit at the UN.
- The July 2005 global GPPAC conference at UN headquarters brought together over 900 people from 118 countries to launch an international civil society movement to prevent armed conflict. This was a remarkable achievement and sent an important signal.
- Making use of the global network, ECCP has contributed to the Departments of Peace initiative that aims to establish peace ministries in the governments of various countries. See Box 7.2 above.
- On behalf of GPPAC, ECCP has been closely involved in the development of the UN Peacebuilding Commission, successfully lobbying for the inclusion of civil society representatives. See Box 7.1 above.

328 19% of the respondents of survey version A and 8% of the respondents of survey version B felt that their involvement in the global and/or regional GPPAC network had raised their visibility.

329 Interview with staff members of ECCP. The Hague, Netherlands, 18 July 2006.
However, there are other expectations that GPPAC has not yet met. Mentioned most often is the need to become concrete and begin implementing all the plans that have been made. As a part of this it would be beneficial for the network to reach out to the grassroots and organise capacity building activities for local organisations. In addition, more transparency and democracy would increase the constituency behind, and legitimacy of, regional- and global-level activities.

More concrete joint work at the various levels of the Partnership would increase the value of the network to its participants and contribute to their commitment. Such collaborative projects would also make the network more sustained and continuous. In addition, they would help to show the value and impact of the Partnership to external parties. The kinds of activities wanted by people surveyed and interviewed vary somewhat across regions, but many point to the action agendas that were created and make clear that these need to be implemented. Some common priorities for concrete activities that emerge are capacity building and engaging governments and international organisations through campaigns and lobby.

Members feel that GPPAC could have particular added value when it engages in activities that mobilise and link the various levels at which it is organised. In the case of lobby, the added value of GPPAC could lie in exercising pressure on decision-makers from two or more sides: for example, governments could at simultaneously be approached by domestic civil society and by international organisations such as the UN, which are also lobbied by GPPAC. Similarly, high-level lobby in New York could be linked to engagement with UN offices in conflict-affected countries.

**Box 7.5: Gaining visibility: Kenya**

In Kenya, being part of the network has increased the visibility and legitimacy of organisations. For example, for grassroots organisations like the Rural Women Peace Link in Eldoret, Kenya, GPPAC represented an important opportunity to gain visibility for the insights and results gained in their work. It is considered crucial that the voices of local stakeholders can be heard more widely, and GPPAC has made this possible. Whether this enhanced visibility has led to any concrete results is not yet so clear – but the women consider it quite an achievement in itself.

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7.4.2 Discussions on aims and political role

The overall vision of the network – to achieve a shift from reaction to prevention – is adhered to by most GPPAC members (although some, notably in Central Asia, raise doubts about whether the prevention of armed conflict is not more a government than a civil society function). Nonetheless, beyond this vision, many people note a lack of a clear, shared purpose, of a focus area and set of objectives commonly arrived at. This was already formulated as an issue by a mid-term review carried out during the global conference in July 2005:

“[n]etworking without a clear strategy and vision may become meaningless, distract energy and resources and undermine credibility of civil society in the eyes of governments and international organisations. [...] In future, more realistic objectives should be established, for which appropriate capacity in human and financial resources is available.” (Matveeva and Van der Veen 2005: 3, emphasis in original)

The repeated mentioning of this issue by people consulted for the review contrasts somewhat with the fact that over the past year, GPPAC’s Regional and International Steering Groups have developed work plans in which objectives, planned activities and impacts are formulated. The fact that participants still note the absence of clear and shared common objectives appears to be explained by the fact that participation in the development of objectives and plans has been relatively narrow and many people feel left out of the processes; as a result, there is limited ownership of the plans. In addition, the aims and objectives that have been formulated are broad and the step from there to concrete action is still a large one. More focus is needed (see 7.6.6 for more on this). Some people are concerned about the viability of the action agendas and work plans, which are very ambitious. The International Secretariat makes it clear that it is unlikely that funds can be raised for all of the plans formulated. The action agendas also contain many recommendations to governments, on which CSOs have only limited influence.

As a result, expectations vary to some extent about the kinds of activities GPPAC should engage in. One discussion emerged particularly clearly out of the data gathered for the review. It concerns the extent to which the network should engage in activism. In how far should a network like GPPAC play a politically activist role and act like a solidarity, human rights-oriented movement? At present only part of the ‘peace movement’ is interested in GPPAC because its consensus, engagement, relationship building approach means that it is not very outspoken. Is GPPAC credible if it does not take a position on the ‘War on Terror’, for
example? Or would taking such a position jeopardise its relationship with powerful governments and the UN, which is also important? Where is the balance between activism and building relationships with policymakers? In the GPPAC network in Southeast Asia this discussion was given a cultural dimension: people said that while Philippine CSOs have a political and activist tradition, Cambodian CSOs tend to focus more on consensus, engagement, and achieving subtle change (see Box 7.6). In Central Asia a similar discussion takes place, but here it centres more on fears to make the situation of CSOs worse by upsetting already oppressive governments. More subtle and cooperative engagement is preferred by most in this region, although this risks jeopardising one’s principles.

Box 7.6: Opinions about activism in Southeast Asia

In Southeast Asia, expectations and priorities differ with regard to the extent to which the network should engage in activism. The Regional Initiator is an activist, human rights-oriented, solidarity organisation. In part this reflects a strong tradition in Philippine civil society, which has long engaged in political activism. However, others have different priorities. In Cambodia some say that this activist, rights-oriented approach does not match with their own, which focuses more on dialogue and long-term peacebuilding processes by engaging people, building relationships and finding joint solutions. The difference becomes clear when approaches toward Burma are compared: boycott and human rights advocacy versus engaging all actors to achieve joint transformation.

This discussion illustrates an issue that has come to the fore earlier in this study, namely that of the extent to which peace NGOs are able to play a political role and address the structural, political issues that shape global conflict and peace. In 1.6.2 and 4.4 we saw how the funding structures in which many local peace NGOs operate acts as a disincentive for political action and how their position as implementers of donor policies – rather than independent actors – also means that they do little thinking about the way their activities contribute to the wider aims of peacebuilding. Some people inside GPPAC warn that becoming too political would risk funding by, and policy dialogue with, governments. It is suggested as a possible solution to divide the network in two: first, a loose and open People Building Peace movement that would provide a forum for activism and ad hoc coalitions, and secondly, GPPAC, which would be a professional organisation.

331 Interviews in the Philippines and Cambodia, 14-26 May 2006.
7.5 Governance, politics and power issues

7.5.1 Democratic governance and ownership

Formally, the Global Partnership is democratic and inclusive. However, there are some questions about the criteria and procedures for selecting representatives to the governing bodies of the network, and the ways in which these representatives can be held accountable by other members. So far representatives have been selected in a rather informal way. The ECCP asked organisations they were already working with to become Regional Initiator. In most regions, these Regional Initiators organised initial meetings with a limited number of organisations from their personal and professional network. Either all those present at these meetings became the RSG, or the meetings selected a number of RSG members from amongst themselves. In several regions, such as West Africa and Latin America, a pre-existing regional network became the regional GPPAC network; these networks kept their existing structures intact. For these pre-existing networks the decision to join GPPAC may not have been so broadly carried. For example, West African national-level network members interviewed were familiar with WANEP but not with GPPAC or the Regional or Global GPPAC Action Agendas.

Thus, the process through which the Global Partnership has been created and developed has been largely top-down. Still, people involved in these processes make clear that it was only natural for them that those who had initiated the Partnership would be asked to carry it forward. Indeed, it seems difficult to envision a network starting up in a more democratic way. However, now that the network is moving towards implementation people are starting to ask questions about the legitimacy of procedures and representatives. In particular those who do not have a representative position within GPPAC are increasingly critical. Their criticism also relates to a lack of transparency: to the extent that criteria and procedures do exist for the selection of representatives and for holding them accountable, they are unknown to most members. In recognition of these issues, the International Steering Group is in the process of drafting a GPPAC charter. Unfortunately, this is done with little or no input from the regional networks and few people know about it.

It has only been three years since the network has begun to develop, and in many regions it has not yet expanded much beyond the Regional Steering Group and a small group of other organisations that have some kind of relation with one or more of its members (often mainly in the country in which the Regional Initiator is based). Community-level organisations and other grassroots actors are not yet involved in most
regions. All this means that the sense of ownership of the network itself, and of the priorities and strategies it has formulated, remains limited to a relatively narrow circle of people.

**Box 7.7: Ownership in Central and East Africa**

In the eyes of NPI-Africa, the Regional Initiator for Central and East Africa, different levels of ownership can be distinguished. For ECCP, GPPAC is its major activity and ownership is therefore high. For NPI-Africa, it is one of many activities, although the sense of ownership is still strong. At the national level, participants often need to be pushed in order to act, although interest usually rises in the run-up to a major event. This is unless GPPAC helps an organisation meet its own objectives, as is the case with network organisations.

### 7.5.2 Power, competition and conflict

Inequalities, personal rivalries, competition, and power games are omnipresent and as we have seen they can even be found in peace networks. Issues that GPPAC’s regional and national networks have dealt with include accusations of nepotism (West Africa) and networks competing for the status of regional GPPAC network (Caucasus). More generally, many stakeholders mention competition among CSOs (over funding, projects, contacts) as an important obstacle to cooperation and networking and as creating a potential for conflicts within the networks of the Global Partnership. It is important for a network to strive to mitigate competition and to have mechanisms in place that regulate conflict and prevent personal issues from taking the foreground.

Power relations outside of the network also shape its functioning. Where the political context in a region is repressive towards civil society, then civil society organising and networking may be seen as a threat by governments. In Central Asia, CSOs tend to stay out of activities relating to conflict because this is seen as too political and therefore as risking government opposition. Instead, many organisations prefer to carry out ‘technical’ socio-economic projects, in the hope that by doing so they may slowly win the confidence of governments and build relations with them. Through that avenue they hope to be able to subtly influence government policy regarding conflict at a later stage.

In some places, the conflicts the networks aim to resolve themselves inhibit networking. GPPAC’s Middle East and North Africa network

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332 Interview with staff members of NPI-Africa. Nairobi, Kenya, 29 and 30 November 2005.
consists of Arab organisations whose opposition to allowing Israeli CSOs to join has led to the exclusion of the latter. Among Israeli peace organisations, but also among members in other parts of the world, there is considerable bitterness about this: how can such an important conflict region have such unbalanced representation in a network working for peace? As we have seen in the previous chapters, conflict also presents indirect obstacles as it leads to low resources and bad infrastructure. Many national-level members in West Africa have limited access to internet and electricity and cannot move around easily due to bad roads and a lack of available cars. Finding creative ways to involve these members and help build their capacity will be part of attempts to become more rooted at the grassroots.

7.6 Facilitating knowledge sharing

We have seen that knowledge exchange is not only closely connected to all other aims and activities of the Global Partnership, but also represents one of its major aims in itself. Aspects of learning and knowledge sharing were mentioned most often as a function of the network by the members consulted for the review (see 7.2): research, access to external expertise and building internal expertise, disseminating knowledge, linking internal expertise with policy formulation of donors and official actors, facilitating the exchange of experiences among members, learning from one another’s successes and failures, and lending inspiration from the stories of others. In 7.4.1 we also saw that knowledge sharing is seen as the function that has been most successful so far. With regard to both of these findings (the importance attached to knowledge sharing as a function and the fact that people say it has indeed taken place) there is little variation among the regions. In this section and the next, we turn to the ways in which GPPAC facilitates knowledge sharing, learning and the dissemination of knowledge by its members.

7.6.1 Knowledge sharing in the regions

Between early 2003 and the fall of 2006, the knowledge sharing process in the regions looked as follows. After ECCP approached a strong NGO in each region to help start a network there, this NGO

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333 Important in that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a high-profile one and has an impact on conflicts in other parts of the world as well.
334 After this point I have not been able to closely follow the network.
organised a meeting with organisations from different countries in the region, with support from ECCP. At these meetings an initial structure for the network was created (in most cases, those present at the initial meeting became National Focal Points and together made up a Regional Steering Group) and the participants went on to mobilise other organisations to join. Some organised national conferences in their countries. The outcomes of these conferences served as input for a regional conference. These regional conferences were presented explicitly as part of a process leading up to a global conference on the role of civil society in conflict prevention that was to be organised at UN headquarters. They aimed to produce Regional Action Agendas which could not only be of value for work inside the regions, but would also be compiled into one publication335 and serve as input for a Global Action Agenda, to be presented in New York. Regional conferences indeed took place in each region, and action agendas were developed everywhere. The ISG and ECCP were responsible for the creation of the global agenda and the organisation of the New York conference, which took place in July 2005.

The regional process running up to the global conference was one with clear aims and a clear end point. However, after July 2005 there was a loss of momentum. It proved difficult to raise funds for follow-up processes, specifically the implementation of the action agendas. In most regions, the frequency of interaction decreased after this point, although in 2006 most regional steering groups met to turn the action agendas into more specific work plans which could be used for fundraising. Below, a more detailed account of regional interactions between 2003 and 2006 is given for four regional GPPAC networks: Southeast Asia, Central Asia, Central and East Africa and West Africa.

In Southeast Asia GPPAC built on activities that were already taking place in the region. The organisation Initiatives for International Dialogue (IID) in Davao City in Mindanao, the Philippines, was asked by ECCP as Regional Initiator because of the networking it was already facilitating. It consulted CSOs in the region, asking whether they were interested in gathering their efforts under the banner of GPPAC. Most answered positively, although some groups were wary and feared they would be used by Northern interests. However, since the regional GPPAC conference in 2003, IID and other regional actors started to feel owner of the process and initially hesitant groups became more involved. The Southeast Asian Regional Steering Group (RSG) consists of National Focal Points (NFPs) and a number of regional organisations.

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335 GPPAC 2005.
Some countries have one NFP; others have two or three, or none. The networking process inside the countries is left up to the focal points, but the regional secretariat (IID) provides support. This support consists of advice, linking with others, and providing materials; no financial assistance is provided. The regional secretariat also coordinates region-wide activities such as lobbying with ASEAN. The GPPAC network in Southeast Asia is linked through IID and other members to other regional networks, such as the Asia Pacific Solidarity Coalition, which is more oriented towards activist pressure politics.

The RSG meets irregularly, about once a year. National-level meetings have particularly taken place to prepare for the 2003 regional conference and to report back afterwards (although in Cambodia, such a report-back meeting never occurred). The same occurred before and after the global conference in 2005. In the Philippines, the NFP stated that since there is already so much networking taking place in the country the national GPPAC network does not have so much added value; she sees more value at the regional level. Next to face-to-face meetings there is a lot of e-mail traffic inside GPPAC Southeast Asia, unlike in other regions. It mainly takes the form of messages sent around by IID informing the members of events taking place in the region in relation to conflict and peace in order to keep people informed of current affairs and build regional solidarity. These messages are much appreciated by interviewees.

In Central Asia, the Foundation for Tolerance International (FTI), which had been asked to be GPPAC Regional Initiator, organised a first GPPAC meeting in Bishkek in 2003 with a small group of CSO leaders from the Central Asian countries. They distributed information on GPPAC in their countries and invited other organisations to join. The initiating organisations became selected as national coordinators. Three of these went on to organise national conferences at which country priorities were elaborated. Such national conferences took place in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. In May 2005, a regional conference was held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. During this conference a Regional Action Agenda was developed. The May 2005 regional conference also led to the publication of a booklet (GPPAC Central Asia 2005). The regional conference in May 2005 is evaluated positively; it was characterised by wide participation and heated discussions. The action programme created was supported by all. However, it seemed unrealistic to the Regional Initiator who urged for

some sections to be cut. The slimmed down version still has the support of all involved, but is yet to be implemented.

All the national conferences developed action agendas in preparation for the regional action agenda, but some of the agendas were more concrete than others. In Tajikistan the national conference not only produced an action agenda but also led to more cooperation with government. The expectation in Tajikistan was that there would be a regional conference a few months after the national one. However, the regional conference did not take place until a year later, by which time enthusiasm and commitment in Tajikistan had already faded and people had forgotten about the plans developed. After the May 2005 regional conference there was some renewed interest but no activities have been organised at the national level. This is blamed mainly on the lack of funds. Nonetheless, a regional working group meeting with the regional and national coordinators was held in March 2006, and a work plan was developed there.

Quite a number of people participated in national and regional conferences (most of which also included high level government people), but not all of these consider themselves part of GPPAC or are even clear about what the network entails. The General Assembly of the grassroots Dolina Mira network in the Ferghana Valley voted to become part of GPPAC after the Regional Initiator gave a presentation about it – but this presentation is the only experience the Dolina Mira members have with GPPAC so far.

In Central and East Africa, the regional process started in March 2003 with a meeting to which a number of strategic actors from the various countries were invited. During that meeting NPI-Africa was elected Regional Initiator for GPPAC, and the others present more or less naturally became NFPs. Some focal points organised national consultation conferences, other visited organisations in their country to discuss GPPAC, and still others lacked a significant national consultation process. Any organisation involved in peace work could join GPPAC at the national level, but not everyone was able to participate in the regional and global conferences due to limited funds. In October 2004 NPI-Africa organised a Regional Consultation, resulting in a press release and a Regional Action Agenda. The conference also issued specific recommendations that were distributed at the UN-African Union conference on the Great Lakes region that took place several weeks later.
Since New York, some of the Central and East African NFPs used the Global Action Agenda in their own countries, forwarding recommendations to government and getting recommendations included in national documents on peace and security. In addition, an RSG meeting was held in 2006 in which a Regional Work Plan was developed. The focal points consult regularly with NPI-Africa. NPI-Africa sends them e-mails about events taking place in GPPAC globally in order for them to forward it to the members in their country. NPI-Africa does not have a clear picture of the extent to which this has taken place; from the survey and interviews it becomes clear that not all participants are satisfied with the communication and information flows. As elsewhere, all involved are anxious to raise money to implement the work plan, which has not happened so far. Nevertheless, there are some ongoing regional GPPAC activities, including the organisation of a workshop on the UN Peacebuilding Commission in Burundi and the development of joint activities for UN Peace Day.

In West Africa ECCP had cooperated with WANEP (see chapter six) before and since that network was already well established its secretariat was asked to become the Regional Initiator for West Africa. WANEP did not need to set up a new network as occurred in other GPPAC regions, but joined GPPAC as a whole. In August and September 2004 a regional conference was organised under the theme ‘Consolidating the Role of Civil Society Promoting Good Governance and Preventing Violent Conflicts’. By the end of the conference a Regional Action Agenda had been developed and n RSG, made up of representatives of fourteen West African countries, had been created. The Regional Action Agenda focused on the role that CSOs can play in different phases of conflict. In addition to the prevention of armed conflict, the agenda identified as focus areas human rights, elections, youth, chieftaincy, small arms proliferation, gender, religion, and the media. Since New York, the RSG has held a consultation meeting and developed a framework for ‘localising’ the Agenda in the various countries. Although during my visit to the region in February 2006 no national- and local level WANEP members had yet heard of the action agenda, this may have changed since then.

7.6.2 Global knowledge sharing

GPPAC members I met who attended the New York conference all considered it largely successful, mainly because they had gained new contacts from around the world and because the scale and location of the conference meant that it could give a powerful signal. It showed the
strength and unity of global civil society working for peace, emphasised the importance of conflict prevention, and advocated more involvement of civil society in achieving this. However, there was also some criticism, which centred mainly around two issues. First, there was little representation from official actors – powerful governments and the UN itself – which could hear the message of civil society. Secondly, as all attention and resources went towards the organisation of the conference, its follow-up received too little attention.

Post-New York the global level of GPPAC has remained the most active. The ISG holds bi-annual meetings. Out of its midst an executive committee has been created, which meets even more often. In addition, the ISG has created several theme groups, also from its midst, which sometimes meet in the margins of ISG meetings. As for the content of such meetings, much of them is taken up by procedural issues, discussions about which activities and themes will receive priority, and planning and fundraising. However, the theme groups focus on content. Exchange of the experiences the ISG members have with peacebuilding in the regions also takes place – as much in the margins of meetings as during formal discussions – and this is found most useful. Several ISG members mentioned to me how surprised they were about the similarity of issues faced in the different regions. The ISG members are leading civil society figures from their regions and tend to be inspiring characters; when they meet they also inspire one another.

About half of the resources that have been raised since the global conference are spent at the global level and go to the organisation of these meetings and the running of the secretariat at ECCP. Fewer resources are available for the maintenance of the regional secretariats, let alone for processes at the national or even grassroots levels. As a result, the knowledge that is shared and the decisions that are made at the global level are not always informed by the stakeholders in the regions, nor do they always find their way towards them. Many members complain that they are not kept up to date and are not consulted when decisions have to be made. They are also insufficiently aware of the structures and strategies of the network.

The bottleneck appears to be at the level of the Regional Secretariats. They do not always forward information to member organisations in the regions and are not forthcoming with information towards the International Secretariat. For some regions, ECCP even has difficulty obtaining the contact details of the Regional Steering Group members. The Regional Secretariats consider the information they receive from the International Secretariat to be too much and as a result do not always act
upon information sent to forward it to members in the region. Regional Secretariat staff often spend time in the field and when they return to the office to find ten or twenty urgent GPPAC e-mails then they do not know where to start.

7.6.3 Stimulating framework

One of the conclusions emerging from the consultation of GPPAC members around the world when it comes to knowledge sharing is that the Global Partnership should not strive to build an overall, comprehensive knowledge system, but instead should offer a stimulating framework that facilitates exchange and access to knowledge sources. The approach towards knowledge sharing that has been decided upon by GPPAC’s knowledge generation and sharing task force, and later by the ISG, does not contradict this finding. It takes one topic as a ‘pilot’ for knowledge sharing, using it to develop a structure for knowledge sharing and collaborative learning. The topic selected is peace education (see 7.7). A peace education reference group has been set up at the global level and a series of conferences and meetings has been planned. The aim is for this pilot process to lead to the establishment of a knowledge generation and sharing framework that could be used for other topics as well.

It is considered important by members of GPPAC that such a framework for knowledge sharing pays particular attention to gathering and mobilising the knowledge that is available at the regional, national, and particularly the local level. Local communities and organisations often have unique experiences and mechanisms for dealing with conflict, but they have difficulty in making this known to others. A global network such as GPPAC is expected by its members to help achieve this.

7.6.4 Flexibility

The fact that the focus area of GPPAC is so broad has the advantage that, at least in theory, it makes the network able to respond to changes in the environment, adjusting its policy or starting new initiatives around these. Indeed, the ISG has the mandate to take far-reaching decisions. However, in practice the consensus structure and consensus-oriented nature of the people involved means that radical decisions are not easily taken and difficult choices tend to be postponed, for example with regard to the activism issue described in 7.4.2. In addition, communication in between ISG meetings does not always run smoothly,
with ISG members in the regions giving priority to other pressing matters and with the International Secretariat sending so much information that it becomes difficult to decide what is important. As a result of all this, GPPAC has not always been able to respond to current events. At the time of my involvement in GPPAC in 2006, for example, many were critical about the fact that GPPAC remained silent during the war in Lebanon that summer. On the other hand, where it concerns more gradual relation-building and lobbying processes at a high level, GPPAC has kept pace with new developments, mainly the creation of the UN Peacebuilding Commission with which it has been closely involved. In part this may be explained by the fact that ECCP already had experiences with this kind of work.

Individual participants are quite passive in waiting for decisions to come from the centre. In theory a network is not a hierarchical decision-making structure but a framework in which members can organise themselves in varying combinations around varying issues as the need arises. Indeed, in a region like Southeast Asia, campaigns and programmes carried out by the Regional Secretariat are reinforced by using the name of GPPAC as a way of showing the worldwide constituency that is behind the activity undertaken, without first soliciting the agreement of the ISG for doing so. That, after all, would take too long. In this way, participants at national or regional levels could pro-actively organise activities loosely under the banner of GPPAC. However, the amount of attention and resources going to organisational issues and to global-level structures may inhibit such flexibility. In part this is also donor-induced as donor agencies ask detailed work plans that require a high degree of organisation and counter flexibility.

7.6.5 Safe space, trust and levels of learning

All those involved agree that within the networks of GPPAC there is an atmosphere of safety in which people can express doubts, criticisms and uncertainties. Participants are not afraid to speak freely. That said, there is one limitation: language. Not everyone involved is fluent in English. At the ISG that presents difficulties for at least one of the Regional Initiators. At the regional level, more people experience difficulties due to language, particularly in the regions where English is the language used in the regional network. The people who are less fluent in the dominant language – such as the Cambodian participants in the Southeast Asian network - feel disadvantaged and do not speak as freely as others. This language barrier also represents an obstacle when it
comes to the dissemination of information by the International Secretariat. This information is usually in English, and the Regional Secretariats do not have budgets for translation.

At the regional and global levels there is trust among the members of GPPAC. While attending several ISG meetings I observed that its discussions did not appear in any way constrained by rivalry among the members. Generally there is confidence that others are in it for the larger good. Trust is important from the perspective of creating a context for deeper-level reflection and learning, also across cultures, which requires the ability to openly question one’s assumptions and values. In a context of low trust this is unlikely to occur. However, at the national level participants note competition over funding as a constraining factor for networking, cooperation and sharing. In addition, the lack of transparency with regard to procedures and representation gives rise to some distrust at the national and regional levels. As we saw in the analysis of WANEP in the previous chapter, in some countries there is even some suspicion of power games, of personal disputes playing too strong a role, and of nepotism on the part of people claiming to represent the network.

An interesting question is whether the different levels of trust at different levels of the network correspond with different levels of reflection and learning. It may be hypothesised that high trust and little direct competition at higher levels of the network lead to deeper-level (second- and third-order) reflection, while lower trust and more competition at lower levels results in more superficial (first-order) learning. Another factor supporting open exchange and reflection at the global level could be that power differences play less of a role: all present lend similar weight and legitimacy from their positions as prominent regional peacebuilders. Checking this hypothesis is not really possible without attending more meetings at the various levels. However, based on the meetings I have attended and the information given about other meetings, it appears to have some substance. In the local-level network meeting in Kenema, Sierra Leone described in Box 5.3, exchange was all at the level of facts and developments and there was little reflection on whether organisations were doing the right thing. In and around ISG meetings such discussions do take place – although there, too, the majority of time is spent on practical matters.
7.6.6 Balance between inclusiveness and focus

An issue faced by GPPAC is finding the right balance between inclusiveness and diversity on the one hand, and focus and direction on the other. This goes for content as well as membership. Many people involved in GPPAC fear that with too broad an aim it will be difficult to continue to rally people around the network and its activities. Members refer to other networks which they feel show that networks function best when they come together around a specific, concrete issue. Examples mentioned include the Campaign to Ban Landmines and the Campaign against Small Arms and Light Weapons. By contrast, GPPAC is huge, has a wide aim, and consists of organisations with a variety of specialisations and objectives. This makes it quite a challenge to come up with workable plans. Even the functions that have now been agreed on are still very broad. Many members feel the network should try to focus on a smaller number of achievable aims. This would make it more effective as its goals would be obtainable and its members committed. It would make the network more concrete and enable it to make a visible impact, leading to more motivation and commitment of members. Finding a focus area would also help GPPAC to find a ‘niche’ and create a GPPAC ‘brand’, leading to a clearer message to use in lobby and advocacy efforts.

However, achieving such focus would not be an easy matter in the case of GPPAC because it would entail some very hard choices. There would be disagreements on priorities, and some would lose out. Some members may even have to be left out because they are too far removed from the central aims of the network, as is discussed in the next section. If GPPAC were to become more focused, as many members ask, it may lose one source of strength, namely its size and coverage, broadness, and general message. The question the network is faced with, therefore, is whether it should become more like a professional organisation, or rather provide a kind of general umbrella for all sorts of specific initiatives to emerge. If GPPAC decides to become more focused, that does not necessarily mean that the same focus is chosen for every region. Different regions may have different priorities.

7.7 Content and outcomes of knowledge sharing

7.7.1 Content balance

Positively from the perspective of the call for more focus, the members of GPPAC identify a relatively clearly circumscribed list of issues
around which they would like to exchange knowledge and experiences. The main priorities for knowledge sharing in the network are the following:

- conflict prevention and peacebuilding knowledge (research results, theoretical knowledge, lessons learned) and methods (tools, experiences, skills) in general
- specialised issues and methods, such as peace education, human rights, and early warning and early response
- experiences in the field
- Information about GPPAC: goals, action plans, developments – including follow up to UN activities
- activities undertaken by other members – it is important to know what others are doing because this could lead an organisation to identify opportunities for cooperation or to be inspired by activities taking place in other regions
- lobbying and advocacy methods, in order for members and national and regional networks to become more effective in this area
- the role of civil society: in some regions, there is a lot of unclarity and disagreement over the role civil society in general, and a network such as GPPAC, should play. For example, how political should it be, and how should it relate to governments?
- networking methodologies and lessons, in order to develop and operate networks at the various levels more effectively
- capacity building methods, so people within the network can support each other’s skills training and organisational development for more effective operation

At the same time, as can be expected, there are also some differences between the priorities of regions and organisations with regard to knowledge to be shared. These are differences in both the knowledge demand and supply. Some of the regional networks possess expertise of a particular issue (such as the West African network does with regard to early warning and early response), which they could share with other regions that need it.

The ISG has decided to focus knowledge sharing initially on the issue of peace education and conflict resolution in schools. It was the issue most ‘alive’ among organisations, and indeed, many respondents in the framework of the review mention it. Moreover, peace education activities are mentioned in eleven out of the fifteen Regional Work Plans. In addition, as Box 7.8 shows, initiatives in this field already exist in some of the regions.
The idea is to use the experiences with knowledge sharing around peace education at a later stage when other issues are adopted. However, some (including several, but not all, staff of the International Secretariat) are disappointed with the choice. Conflict resolution education is rather long-term oriented and little operational. They would have preferred it if

- more attention would be paid to urgent and concrete issues: what do we do about Lebanon?
- knowledge sharing would also focus on concrete activities taking place in the network, sharing stories for inspiration (and legitimation) of the network.
- more generally, the wealth of knowledge inside the network would be better mobilised.
- knowledge sharing with outside actors had also been prioritised. For example, a Secretariat staff member points out that although about half the members of GPPAC are also members of IANSA, little knowledge is shared with that network. That said, the group working on peace education has linked up with both the International Network for Conflict Resolution in Schools and Peace Education and the Hague Appeal for Peace Global Campaign on Peace Education. Both of these networks have representatives in the peace education reference group.
- more thought would be given to conceptualising knowledge sharing and thinking about the best way to approach it. The GPPAC knowledge sharing task force is working on this through the peace education pilot, but many involved appear to be unaware of this.

This leads to the conclusion that it may be better to allow knowledge sharing priorities to differ according to the region and type of

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337 Interview with director of a Philippine NGO. Quezon City, Philippines, 19 May 2006.
338 GPPAC’s stories database on www.peoplebuildingpeace.org/stories indeed has this ambition.
organisation, and that the Global Partnership could be more flexible in allowing for different groups and coalitions to operate simultaneously without deeming it necessary to get the entire network involved. This would make it possible to exchange around more specific issues, since topics would no longer have to be broad enough to be relevant to the entire global network. Reflecting this conclusion, GPPAC’s International Steering Group has set up task forces on specific issues. However, representation in them does not really penetrate the regions (the task forces are composed only of ISG members and in some cases outside experts) and most of them have not set concrete objectives, making it unclear what participants may expect to gain from the exchange.

7.7.2 Outcomes of knowledge sharing

An interviewee in Central Asia remarked that “knowledge exchange meetings can be a waste of time. Often boring meetings are held in which everyone just sums up what they have been doing, without a clear aim for something to come out of the meeting. A meeting needs to have a clear thematic focus, and clear objectives.” Participants are more willing to invest in knowledge sharing if it generates common products. Indeed, ECCP has compiled two People Building Peace books in which stories of civil society peacebuilding efforts are documented, as well as a number of region-specific books. The first book was developed before the Global Partnership came into existence, while the second was compiled making use of the global network to gather stories. According to ECCP, the second People Building Peace book has become much richer in terms of the range of experiences and the quality of stories it contains, and this is due to the Global Partnership providing access to people and their stories around the world. Thus, in this sense, the publication of People Building Peace II represents a very real and concrete outcome of the GPPAC network. Indeed, the book, which was distributed at the global GPPAC conference in July 2005, is considered useful by the network members, particularly for inspiration: the stories of others bring the moral support of knowing that others all over the world are working for the same goal. Recognising that translation is an issue and dissemination of the book a challenge - it is relatively heavy to send or carry - the book has been translated into French and Spanish and placed on CD-rom.

339 Interview with staff member of an international NGO. Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 24 July 2006.
In addition to the book, of course, there are many more stories to tell. Stories such as those documented in *People Building Peace II* not only help and inspire other members but are also an important external resource: they provide practical examples for students of peace and conflict studies, and in that sense can also be made of financial benefit by selling publications to an academic public. In addition, the collection of field stories helps the lobby, advocacy and fundraising efforts of GPPAC by providing concrete examples of what happens inside the network and of the positive roles that civil society organisations can play. ECCP would like to collect stories from the field and best practices on a more regular basis for the purposes mentioned above. Its staff regularly ask the Regional Secretariats to collect stories from their region. However, the International Secretariat finds it difficult to get people to submit stories. This may be because people are not sure exactly what is expected of them. It may also be due to other pressing issues getting priority. Supplying stories to a far-away institution without much certainty about what will happen to them is not first on most people’s to-do list. ECCP is contemplating ways to deal with this. Regional People Building Peace books, which may be more ‘real’ to members, are planned for Latin America and the Caribbean and Southeast Asia. Though excluding those without internet access, a website that documents stories may at the same time be more accessible to people inside and outside of the network than a book. In addition, it can be alive and constantly changing and growing. The website www.peoplebuildingpeace.org/thestories has been set up as a tool for this.

In addition to concrete ‘knowledge products’ like websites and books, knowledge sharing may lead to various other outcomes. Lobby and advocacy are informed by the knowledge of network members and gain weight as a result. To the extent that lobby focuses in achieving more recognition for the role of civil society in peacebuilding, the books and website that document positive examples of CSO activity are also lobbying tools in themselves. From the perspective of lobby and advocacy, knowledge sharing outcomes may include changed policies of official actors as a result of input from GPPAC. At this stage, it is possible to show that GPPAC has reached many such actors, but difficult to assess the final impact of this on their policies.

### 7.8 Monitoring and evaluation

As we have seen, GPPAC’s stakeholders agree that it is time the network starts to prove its relevance and make an actual contribution to
armed conflict prevention. Good M&E procedures are indispensable in this regard: otherwise, how can we know if GPPAC has made a contribution? Different planning, monitoring, evaluation and learning systems are in use by the various partners in GPPAC. Creating an alternative system for all to adopt in replacement of existing procedures is not necessarily the way to go. Indeed, one survey respondent wrote that “instead of looking to a certain model, we should see how the different models in use could be connected” (GPPAC 2006c). This might include agreeing on some kind of minimum standard. A Regional Initiator interviewed similarly stated that “the regions have systems of M&E in place that seem to work for them; these should not be replaced, but GPPAC globally could find the common elements of these systems and build on those.”

When considering what should characterise an M&E system for GPPAC, various suggestions are made by those surveyed and interviewed. Most importantly, an M&E system for GPPAC should:

- start by setting realistic, attainable, meaningful objectives that are directly related to the prevention of violent conflict
- involve all the members to ensure ownership and a collaborative learning process
- be an ongoing internal monitoring system complemented by regular external evaluations
- be clear about the responsibility of the various network levels in monitoring
- pay attention to building a strong capacity for M&E at all levels.

The International Secretariat favours adopting the Outcome Mapping method (see section 5.4), at least at the global level where it could complement the various systems in place at other levels. Outcome Mapping is seen to be especially appropriate for networks because relationships and behaviours are central to it. The Secretariat introduced this method at the March 2006 International Steering Group meeting in Nairobi and hoped to immediately apply it to joint planning during this meeting. However, this went a little too fast for the ISG members, who had not been sufficiently consulted about this method and had various questions about it. In the end, Outcome Mapping was only partially used in the planning process.

341 Telephone interview with GPPAC Regional Initiator, 15 August 2006.
7.9 Concluding remarks

What are the implications of the GPPAC case study for the analytical questions posed in Part Three? Global networks that link together civil society actors across countries and regions are one type of initiative taken to support the learning processes of local NGOs. They may act as learning ‘scaffolds’ by providing access to external knowledge that may help place individual activities in a larger perspective and make possible learning by comparison, discussion and reflection. Through discussions during network meetings and online exchange, joint learning is facilitated. In addition, a network such as GPPAC potentially gives local NGOs the opportunity to make their voice heard more widely, thereby facilitating their contribution to global discussions on peace and conflict.

Given the difficulty local organisations have to influence macro-level issues that affect their work at the micro-level, global networks make possible joint action in the face of broader issues that individual organisations cannot deal with on their own. In the case of GPPAC, its lobby and advocacy work at the UN and other global forums is therefore deemed valuable by GPPAC members, although their input into these activities could be more direct. In relation to the potential cross-border networks have to facilitate joint thinking and action in relation to the bigger picture of conflict and peace, dilemmas can arise regarding the extent of political activism that civil society should engage in at the risk of jeopardising its relations with (donor) governments and its participation in dialogues about policy.

What can we learn from initiatives such as GPPAC in relation to the way they may facilitate learning and make third-order reflection possible? First, the need to find a balance between focus on the one hand and inclusiveness and diversity on the other is seen very clearly in GPPAC. The GPPAC case shows the difficulty of finding such a balance, of taking clear decisions of direction in a network whose value is that it brings together many different kinds of people and organisations. Diversity is conducive to cross-cultural learning and being confronted with organisations from very different backgrounds can stimulate abstraction and out-of-the-box reflection. To make such processes possible, flexibility and openness to suggestions and change are important assets of networks. However, the need for organisation – if only in order to produce plans required for fundraising – is likely to grow as the network develops, running the risk that it turns into a hierarchical organisation rather than a loose structure facilitating individual and joint action. In response to this dilemma some suggest to
divide into a flexible social movement (with more room for activism) and a professional organisation.

Particularly at the national level, conflict, power differences, and competition among NGOs make networking difficult in conflict-affected areas. The early stage in which civil society finds itself in many of the countries under study also plays a role. Many NGOs are highly dependent on specific individuals, and as a result networks can become either groups of friends or platforms for competition among influential people. To some extent, network structures and procedures can help mitigate such issues by providing transparency about participation, representation and decision making. At the regional and, particularly, global levels, problems relating to personal connections, power relations and competitions are not as strong. As a result, there may be more opportunities at those levels for second- and third-order learning, made possible by higher levels of abstraction and a setting of trust and safety in which to openly question assumptions and even values.

What can we learn from GPPAC about the support that Northern actors may give to the knowledge and learning strategies of Southern peace NGOs and increase their agency? GPPAC was initiated and continues to be facilitated by an NNGO, ECCP. Its previous experience and its geographical closeness to potential donors and global decision makers puts it in a good position to support the members of the network through fundraising, lobby to influence the macro structures that shape the work of the members, and efforts to make their voices heard at higher levels. Such activities are likely to be more effective role now that ECCP acts on behalf of a global network of peace organisations, rather than itself alone. In terms of facilitating the learning strategies of local peace organisations, the funds and organisation provided by ECCP has enabled exchanges that are deemed valuable by the members of GPPAC.

However, many feel that its enabling role ought to more strongly include the capacity building of members and network structures at grassroots, national and regional levels. It would be a remarkable achievement if a network like GPPAC could make it possible that training programmes become more widely offered, particularly at the regional and national levels where the content of training could be more sensitive to regional and local circumstances, knowledge, methods, and traditions. Capacity building may also help correct imbalances among members that give stronger members a dominating position. In part, these imbalances are the result of the top-down manner in which GPPAC was created. Connecting to organisations at the remains very problematic for the network.
Although ECCP provides funds to its partners in the network, the relationship it has with them is one of equals. The network is governed by these partners and ECCP only has a small voice in its decision-making. This suggests that the networking approach is more conducive to equal partnership than the policy chain approach. Founding an organisation together with one’s partners, rather than continuing to work ‘through’ them, increases the legitimacy of the activities of an NNGO and makes them more reflective of local knowledge and ideas. In the next chapter, we see another example of an NNGO that has taken the step of creating a structure jointly with partners – one that focuses even more explicitly and exclusively on supporting the learning processes of local peacebuilders.

342 See the citation from NPI-Africa in 4.7.3 (page 215).