



## Trauma resolution and psychosocial rehabilitation – what the Civil Peace Service does

The impact of violence lives on in a society even after violent conflicts have ended. Post-conflict societies are characterised by the traumatising of large sections of their population: the experience of violence, whether through displacement, destruction, death, rape or abuse, is often more than individuals can bear and affects the ability of survivors and perpetrators to co-exist.

To give populations scarred by violence and destruction the chance of playing an active part in rebuilding social and societal structures, sustainable reconstruction and peace building must centre on resolving individual and collective trauma. If experiences of violence are not resolved, there is a risk that the structures of violence will become entrenched, leading to the violent eruption of renewed conflict. The management of psychosocial trauma processes is, therefore, an area in which the Civil Peace Service (CPS) can make a major contribution to peace building.

### Background

Societies in post-conflict countries that bear the scars of their experience of violence face the challenge of coming to terms with their past and tackling their experiences at both individual and collective (social) level, even when the violence is long over. Most survivors can deal with their experience of violence only by remaining silent about it, yet this silence is also often effectively imposed on them by society. This is the case when there is a lack of political will to tackle the past, when one party to the conflict dominates the political interpretation of the violent past, or when society's cultural make-up does not allow it to challenge taboos and speak openly about experiences of violence. The division of society into victims and perpetrators and the continued existence of old power structures are further obstacles to dealing with trauma. Indeed, it is often impossible even to make the distinction between victims and perpetrators: the survivors of a massacre may subsequently be forcibly conscripted and themselves become perpetrators as members of a militia or as child soldiers.

Tackling a violent past of this kind must focus primarily on the dignity of survivors and ensure that their experience of violence is acknowledged. This is essential if traumatised individuals are to

be able to participate in society not just as victims but as survivors and as active members of society, and if society, for its part, is sensitised to the experience of violence and trauma. Against this backdrop, the priority is not merely to help individuals to come to terms with the past through psychosocial support but also to create the basis for rebuilding peaceful co-existence. These areas are, therefore, central to the work of the CPS.

### CPS target groups and partners

The CPS supports measures taken by its local partner organisations to achieve the long-term resolution of trauma. It cooperates primarily with non-governmental organisations that offer specific advice but also works with state providers of psychosocial support and/or in-service training for multipliers. Those involved in this work include social workers, psychologists, teachers, media workers, local authorities and representatives of state agencies and international organisations, including UNICEF.

The target group is traumatised individuals, who are supported in tackling their experience of violence. They are often from rural areas where the infrastructure is inadequate or from highly marginalised sections of the population, such as indigenous women in Guatemala who survived the genocide of the indigenous population. Women are particularly affected by traumatising as the victims of systematic sexual violence during armed conflict.

Beyond the group directly affected by trauma, the CPS also works with the immediate social environment of survivors, with local community representatives, local state agencies, and perpetrators who are willing to take responsibility for their past actions.

### What the CPS does

The aim of the work of the CPS is to support the process of dealing with violence and the experience of violence at individual, group and social level with a view to achieving social reintegration and reconciliation. The CPS therefore seconds experts to local partner organisations.

The CPS works at different levels. It aims to support individuals in integrating their experience of violence at a personal level and in understanding that their 'fate' is, in fact, part of a collective 'fate' governed by violent conflict. It offers specialist advice to survivors and trains experts and multipliers providing psychosocial support. At local community level, it supports local initiatives aimed at a shared approach to tackling trauma in which survivors and other actors from their direct social sphere are involved. Moreover, it promotes awareness-raising measures and publicity that supports trauma resolution at social level. Finally, the CPS supports civil society and state actors in improving their advisory services and in developing professional support structures. It also promotes the development of networks.

CPS experts support the following processes:

- Development of the provision of **psychosocial counselling** for traumatised individuals. The focus here is primarily on tackling the experience of violence at collective level, but counselling provision also includes individual psychotherapeutic support. Peace experts advise on the use of innovative methods, including art, drama and film.
- Psychosocial support for survivors in connection with the **exhumation** of civil war victims in Guatemala and support for local processes to come to terms with civil war violence.
- Support for survivors in Cambodia who come forward to **testify as witnesses** to the Khmer Rouge Tribunal as part of the truth and reconciliation process. Peace experts provide specialist support to local teams of counsellors, who offer psychosocial support to witnesses before, during and after their testimony in a criminal trial. Survivors are encouraged and given support to testify about the crimes they witnessed or to appear as joint plaintiffs before the court.
- Specialised **further training courses for multipliers** and for the staff of partner organisations working with traumatised individuals.
- Academic **training of trauma counsellors**. Peace experts in Cambodia have supported the development of relevant training courses at the University of Phnom Penh and are involved in implementing and developing them.

- Advice to civil society organisations and state bodies in developing effective and sustainable **counselling structures**. For example, in Burundi, the CPS offers advice on specialist psychosocial counselling but also helps establish and develop a national grassroots system for psychosocial support run by state Family Development Centres.
- **Awareness raising and publicity activities**, to make trauma visible and to remove the taboos surrounding it. Public discussion at all levels, from the local up to the political, is a crucial part of the process of truth and reconciliation. Peace experts advise partner organisations on developing appropriate awareness-raising measures, on integrating the topic in in-service training curricula, and on planning local radio programmes in which witnesses and those affected by violence can share their experiences. They also support media campaigns to focus political attention on this area.
- **Networking organisations and institutions** working in the psychosocial field. The CPS promotes technical exchange and cooperation between organisations within a country or across national borders, as is the case with Burundi and Rwanda. As well as sharing their different contexts and experiences of dealing with trauma, these organisations can share methods and strategic considerations relating to trauma resolution as part of the process of tackling a violent past.

The measures implemented by the CPS in cooperation with local partner organisations are helping to secure the psychosocial rehabilitation of individuals who have been affected by violence, are supporting society in coming to terms with violence and its impact, and aim to actively involve the relevant actors in the peace process.



## Burundi

### Trauma resolution and psychosocial rehabilitation – what the Civil Peace Service does

Burundi is marked by the impact of its 16-year civil war, and even now, after two sets of post-war elections, its peace process still faces substantial challenges. The hopes of an integration process based on dialogue evaporated when the all-party government collapsed and the political landscape split into a CNDD/FDD-led Government and an extra-parliamentary opposition. While it is unlikely that widespread violence will again break out, the difficult security situation is jeopardising the sustainable consolidation of peace.

Against this backdrop, the socio-economic reintegration of returning refugees and ex-combatants and the rehabilitation of those impacted by the war (the *sinistrés*) are among the major challenges facing the peace process. The population groups most severely affected by the war are women, children and young people, including former child soldiers, who are particularly likely to be the victims of violence. Giving them an opportunity to deal with their experiences of violence and to benefit from protection and social integration underpins success in the peace process. Failure to achieve rehabilitation and to initiate the reconciliation process, by contrast, brings the risk of renewed violent conflict.

GIZ's CPS programme therefore works in three areas – psychosocial rehabilitation and reintegration, transitional justice, and security – to support the process of consolidating peace. It takes a holistic approach to help break the spiral of violence that has existed since independence, both through providing psychosocial and legal redress for a violent past and through preventing renewed violence.

In cooperation with UNICEF, the CPS supports Burundi's Ministry for National Solidarity, Human Rights and Gender (MSNDPHG) and civil society organisations working to provide psychosocial support. Its objective is to develop a national grassroots system for the psychosocial rehabilitation and reintegration of groups affected by ethno-political violence since independence, particularly women and children. MSNDPHG Family Development Centres (CDFs) at municipality and province level and grassroots structures set up by civil society are the basis of this future system. Their services in trauma counselling and civil conflict resolution are to be improved. These centres and structures are the first point of contact for victims seeking professional help.

To achieve this, the CPS is helping to strengthen CDFs at institutional level and is also supporting professionalisation of the technical capacity of CDFs and grassroots civil society structures. In both components, development measures include work at all levels, from micro level up to macro level, from training for psychosocial assistants in villages to advice on the development of national policy in the psychosocial area.

A peace expert supports UNICEF Burundi's child protection sub-cluster in devising, developing and implementing a curriculum and appropriate modules for training trauma counsellors. The expert supports the introduction of a model for the psychosocial support of vulnerable groups, delivers training courses, and supports the development of networks of actors delivering psychosocial support in Burundi.

A further peace expert advises MSNDPHG officials on improving and strategically extending the services provided by the Family Development Centres, works locally with CDF staff to develop the provision of services for target groups, and supports further training for multipliers in the areas of psychosocial support and civil conflict resolution.

Further training for staff within CDFs and others involved in psychosocial care in the areas of psychosocial counselling and trauma resolution, the development of tailored curricula, and the reinforcement and professionalisation of counselling services in Family Development Centres are achieving a sustainable improvement in the preconditions for psychosocial rehabilitation of citizens traumatised by violence during Burundi's civil war.

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# Palestinian Territories

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The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one of the world's longest-running conflicts and, after decades of occupation, it is characterised by a marked inequality in power. The issues involved are highly complex - the end of the occupation, the scope for a two-state solution and the issue of the future borders that such a solution would raise, the building of settlements, the right of return for Palestinian refugees, the status of Jerusalem, and guarantees of basic democratic rights. Against this backdrop, the CPS programme supports efforts to reduce and prevent violence as a contribution to promoting peace in the region. Its work is aimed primarily at reintegrating and rehabilitating groups that have been particularly severely affected by violence and centres on promoting the local population's mental health.

Day-to-day life in the Palestinian Territories continues to be dominated by the presence of the military, an uncertain legal situation, restrictions on freedom of movement, violence, poverty, and a lack of prospects. There is also an evident decline in social cohesion, with people who have experienced violence passing it on to people who are more vulnerable. The situation is particularly tense in the hotspot around East Jerusalem, in the Palestinian refugee camps on the West Bank and in villages cut off from their neighbouring communities by the wall. These are the areas where the CPS focuses its support and intervention.

The CPS supports partner organisations in planning advice services and in psychosocial support for individuals seeking to come to terms with debilitating and traumatic experiences.

Five CPS experts advise the partner organisations on programme planning and on organising initial and further training in psychotherapy and pedagogy, deliver in-service training and coaching for trainers and multipliers, and supervise the implementation of group activities. The experts provide individual counselling for those affected by violence and also advise partner organisations on improving their institutional structures and networking. The aim is that tackling experiences of violence and improving psychosocial skills will boost the self-esteem of women, children and young people in particular and promote them as active champions of non-violent conflict resolution. The objective is that these actors take responsibility and exert a positive influence at local level with regard to reducing violence and crime within the Palestinian population but also in relation to the occupying forces. The population is then better able to assert its basic democratic rights.

A CPS expert advises the *International Center of Bethlehem*, which supports women, young families and older people in developing strategies for tackling traumatic events and long-term psychological stress. This stress is exacerbated by the fragmentation of Palestinian society and the weakening of social

structures that results from emigration. In cooperation with local partners, successful existing psychosocial programmes in Bethlehem are being replicated in communities in the northern West Bank, with the aim of improving the psychosocial provision for the population there. The CPS partner organisation *Madaa Silwan* in East Jerusalem has a similar focus: it develops provision for tackling mental stress in the target groups of children, women and young people. The CPS also supports an NGO, the *Ghirass Cultural Center*, in developing further training provision in psychosocial support and education for social workers and teachers working in schools. The CPS works closely with families who have suffered violence, giving help and support in particular to children and young people with learning difficulties.

CPS's work in refugee camps also focuses on building up individual resources and psychosocial skills in dealing with experiences of violence that are essential if violence is to be de-escalated and prevented. This component is thus an integral part of the CPS cooperation with the *Yafa Cultural Center* in the Balata refugee camp. The two bodies work together to train promoters of non-violent conflict resolution and to equip them to use these skills in their immediate environment. Further in-service training in tackling experiences of violence and in supporting psychosocial processes is provided in the five refugee camps in the southern West Bank in cooperation with the UN relief agency UNWRA. This work, too, is linked to components designed to resolve conflict and boost participative processes.

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## Cambodia

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Between 1975 and 1979, the Khmer Rouge dictatorship claimed the lives of around 1.7 million Cambodians. Cambodian society remains traumatised by its experiences of violence and by decades of civil war, with a prevailing climate of silence around the crimes perpetrated. The Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC), also known as the Khmer Rouge Tribunal, is now working to prosecute the main perpetrators of these crimes. However, despite this major step, the process of dealing with the past and addressing in depth the personal and social impact of violence is still at a very early stage in Cambodia.

The CPS therefore focuses on rehabilitating groups that were particularly severely affected by violence, an essential step if the survivors are to take an active part in the process of reconciliation and peace building. CPS experts support processes of psychological integration of traumatic events and of psychosocial counselling and support for survivors and train multipliers and trauma counsellors. They also work in the areas of publicity and awareness-raising to make trauma visible and to facilitate public acknowledgement of the experiences of violence.

A particular focus is on the witnesses and civil joint plaintiffs to the Khmer Rouge Tribunal. A CPS expert supports the partner organisation, *Transcultural Psychosocial Organization*, in cooperation with the ECCC to offer psychological counselling to witnesses before, during and after their court appearances. The CPS expert also advises on the development of training and information material on the Khmer Rouge Tribunal, on the manifestations of trauma it can trigger, and on managing those manifestations. ECCC staff and those working for other civil society organisations in the areas of human rights, peace and social issues receive training in trauma. A handbook on trauma has been developed with the partner organisation, the *Center for Social Development/Center for Justice and Reconciliation*, which tackles the subject from a Cambodian cultural perspective. This handbook is also used on a training course for future trauma counsellors at the

Royal University of Phnom Penh, where, with the support of a peace expert, the Department of Psychology trains around 20 psychologists a year in trauma and trauma counselling in its Master's programme.

A CPS expert supports the production of a weekly radio programme entitled *The Truth*, which offers victims an opportunity to find out more about ECCC processes and to share their experiences with others. As part of a broader outreach campaign, the CPS has supported discussion groups and public fora on justice and reconciliation, which have enabled large numbers of survivors to break their years of silence and to share their experiences and stress for the first time. The CPS partner organisation *Youth for Peace* promotes this exchange beyond generational boundaries: one CPS expert supports village-level encounters between young people and survivors of the Khmer Rouge era, making coming to terms with traumatic experiences part of a dialogue about national reconciliation in Cambodia.

Alongside bringing these crimes to trial, tackling a violent past at these different levels is essential for building peace and reconciliation in a country still scarred by genocide.

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