



Women of Faith Transforming Conflict
A Multi-Religious Training Manual



Different faiths
Common action

RELIGIONS *for* PEACE
WORLD CONFERENCE OF RELIGIONS FOR PEACE

Women of Faith *Transforming Conflict*

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Foreword

Religious women and the myriad organizations they have built in the service of their communities are on the front lines of religions working for peace. Conflict transformation efforts, to be successful, must take into account women's perspectives, experiences and unique contributions. Not only do women disproportionately suffer the human consequences of violent conflict, they are the first to respond to victims of conflict and increasingly are assuming leadership roles in their communities. Long before any external aid arrives, women in areas of conflict are the ones on the ground working to meet human needs and rebuild peaceful societies.

The manual you hold in your hands is unique. More than just theory, *Women of Faith Transforming Conflict: A Multi-Religious Training Manual* translates this critical subject into practical training materials which have been tested in the field by women of faith from West Africa and Southeast Europe. The experience of these religious women on the front lines of violent conflict provides valuable tools and lessons for all women and men working to promote peace.

The cross-cutting and practical approach of this manual, responding to needs expressed by women of faith themselves, brings together the best work of two *Religions for Peace* program areas: Conflict Transformation and Women's Mobilization. Through more than 50 Inter-Religious Councils (IRCs), Religions for Peace mobilizes religious communities to work together to prevent and mediate violent conflicts and to rebuild peaceful societies in the aftermath of violence. The Women's Mobilization Program works to support and strengthen the efforts of women of faith and to promote their role in peace-making and post-conflict reconstruction.

This manual will help to effectively mobilize, equip and mainstream religious women working for peace under some of the most difficult circumstances around the globe. By supporting and strengthening the efforts of women of faith, we build the capacity of all faith communities to transform conflict.



Dr. William F. Vendley

Secretary-General

World Conference of Religions for Peace

Acknowledgments

This manual is a testament to the *World Conference of Religions for Peace's* distinct methodology, tried and tested worldwide, and a tribute to the synergy of two of its groundbreaking programs: Women's Mobilization and Conflict Transformation.

The first cut of this, thanks largely to Nadja Schmeil, was enhanced by the co-editor Elisa Levy. Levy skillfully edited and transformed the document into a training manual.

Rev. William Tolbert III, Jacqueline Ogega Moturi and Emily Coffman-Kronic have contributed much to this manual as compilers of information, researchers and trainers. None of the training and programs would be possible without them and their commitment to building peace. Madiha Awais, the Women's Mobilization Program Associate, carried out research and reference checks. Angela Oliver, the director of the Conflict Transformation Program, provided practical expertise in peace-building and training that was essential to the development of this manual. What she has done with her team, her training and her convictions about gender mainstreaming will impact the lives of many people of faith. The director of communications, Clarice Taylor, guided us through the process and helped us bring the disparate elements of this historic manual into a useful product. Special gratitude goes to the final reading and editing provided by Marthe Weyandt.

Our local trainers for the West Africa training, Joseph Rahall, Edward Sam, and Julius Spencer, contributed significantly with their impressive knowledge, creative input and capable partnership. We are also deeply grateful for their tools and exercises, which helped develop this manual.

Our programs to service the women of faith around the world would not be possible without the endorsement of the Secretary-General, Dr. William F. Vendley. Equally critical is the support of the Ford Foundation – to which the Women's Mobilization Program owes its very existence. Also special thanks to the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Cordaid and ACT Netherlands for support to the Conflict Transformation Program in West Africa; and to the United States Agency for International Development, Norwegian Church Aid, MOTT Foundation, ACT Netherlands and King Baudouin Foundation for support to the Conflict Transformation Program in Southeast Europe.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Azza M. Karam". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Azza M. Karam

New York, April 2004

How to Use This Manual

This manual was written to address a need expressed by women of faith themselves.

Civilians account for 90 percent of the casualties in today's wars; more than 70 percent of those are women and children.¹ Although men may be more likely to fight in wars, women and children make up the majority of refugees, and they are more likely to be displaced or killed as a result. Women's experiences and insights, therefore, cannot be either ignored or delegated. Women's voices are thus critical to the needs of society, especially in processes of reconciliation, during which men must listen and invite the active and equal participation of their female counterparts.

Women do not choose their plight in war, but they can and must affirm their role in peace-building.

Women of faith emerge as leaders in the process of peace-building largely due to their unique ability to access masses of people. Unlike their male counterparts, women may often be viewed by the public as non-threatening and able to understand, represent and articulate the needs of other women and vulnerable populations. In many conflicts around the world, women of faith have served as intermediaries between states and rebel groups and civil society. One such woman from Sierra Leone, who was in the interfaith group that went to the rebel stronghold in the bush, noted that the group was able to negotiate the release of 52 child soldiers in 1997.

"We women of faith were able to gain access to the rebel leaders because we were seen as 'doing God's work' and untainted by the politics and posturing of the war. The soldiers told us that we reminded them of their mothers (and their families), whom they had not seen in a long while, due to the war."

Their roles in negotiation with all stakeholders in Sierra Leone and Liberia, as well as their hands-on community outreach work in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, are testimony to the power that women of faith can bring to peace-building.

In order to do this work, women – and the men who work with them – need tools and information. They require sup-

port to strengthen negotiation, communication and advocacy skills; and at the same time, they need information pertaining to best practices and lessons learned from their colleagues in other countries around the world. In that spirit, *Religions for Peace* has prepared this book as a tool, a guide and, we hope, an inspiration to the thousands of women and men who believe that peace is achievable through faith and who inspire others to believe the same.

This manual is based on a series of trainings that *Religions for Peace's* Conflict Transformation and Women's Mobilization Program jointly conducted in West Africa and Southeast Europe.

Section one provides an overview of *Religions for Peace* and these two programs, describing the synergy of their work. A reader interested in gathering ideas for integrating development programs can draw on specific suggestions and plans for coordination and cooperation.

Section two offers insights for readers who want to learn more about the controversial and often contentious role of women and religion in situations of conflict. There is also a detailed description of the inspiration for this book – the regional trainings on "Religion, Women and Conflict" in West Africa. For those interested in how to organize and structure a four-day regional training session on this topic, this section is crucial. This section also includes national action plans designed by, women of faith from Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo. A reader interested in strategic planning for mobilizing faith-based women and their organizations can find specific suggestions for advocacy and training in this section.

Section three is aimed at providing step-by-step sessions for trainers working on three issues: (1) Conflict Transformation; (2) Communication and Leadership Skills; and (3) Media and Advocacy. These activities were first presented in the West African regional training in Sierra Leone by talented local facilitators. Several additional activities were used in follow-up training in Liberia and in Bosnia-Herzegovina. One can facilitate these activities in the same order they are given or pick and choose how and when to use them.

The Annex section includes regional communiqués drafted by participants during the West Africa and Southeast Europe trainings. It also contains a list of other relevant resources.





S E C T I O N 1

***Religions for Peace* Conflict Transformation and Women's Mobilization Program**

The World Conference of Religions for Peace

Purpose and Mission

The World Conference of *Religions for Peace* was established in 1970 in Kyoto, Japan, to create a forum for senior religious leaders to meet in solidarity and community to forge a common good. The participants at the first conference understood the collective power of joining the world's oldest and most far-reaching institutions to

mobilize communities, promote peace and influence social change. Since that time, leaders from around the globe have gathered every five years at the *Religions for Peace* World Assembly to share their experiences and find new ways to promote peace.

Over the past three decades, *Religions for Peace* has continued to facilitate these important world forums and has grown into a worldwide multi-religious movement. With more than 50 Inter-Religious Councils (IRCs) in countries on every continent, *Religions for Peace* has become the largest international coalition of representatives from the world's religions. An Inter-Religious Council is comprised of senior religious leaders representing all major faith traditions of that country. The organization's members have gained a presence at every level of society. They have been present at official peace negotiations, engaging political leaders with combatants. They have also been involved with community-based programs that mitigate the effects of HIV/AIDS on vulnerable populations.

Religions for Peace focuses on six programming areas, including:

- (1) Conflict Transformation
- (2) The Program On Children
- (3) Disarmament and Security
- (4) Development and Ecology
- (5) Human Rights and Responsibilities, and
- (6) Peace Education

In recent years, *Religions for Peace* has had many successes, including helping to end civil war in Sierra Leone; constructing a new climate of reconciliation in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo; building an international network of religious women's organizations; and launching a program to assist children affected by Africa's AIDS pandemic.

***Religions for Peace* Conflict Transformation Program**

Although religion is often blamed for many of the world's conflicts, the relationship between religion and conflict is often oversimplified and misunderstood. Religion, more than any other collective value, has been used throughout history to spur people to action. While the potential for religion to be manipulated is clear, one must consider other possible causes of war, including a grab for power, land acquisition and control over precious resources. In addition, in pursuit of hegemony, many leaders have used religion and ethnicity to mobilize the masses for political expediency.

Yet, while religion plays a role in some conflicts, religious communities have taken the lead to rebuild their nations. Inter- and intra- national conflicts weaken and sometimes destroy states, leaving religious institutions as the main providers of essential services, support and solace for society.

Joining religious institutions towards a common goal of peace-building can be powerful beyond measure: religions can work with other civil society leaders and governments alike to promote human rights, facilitate infrastructural development and help establish a new paradigm for inter-ethnic and inter-religious tolerance and understanding.

If one religion can spur countries into war, joining religions can be a powerful force to help them build peace.

In the late 1990's, *Religions for Peace* started their Conflict Transformation Program to promote inter-religious cooperation in processes of peace-building and reconciliation. In Southeast Europe, West Africa, the Great Lakes region of Africa and other parts of the world, *Religions for Peace* has facilitated multi-religious collaboration that has helped to prevent conflicts from developing, negotiated for peace among warring parties, and rebuilt peaceful societies in the aftermath of violence.

Religions for Peace builds and provides technical support to organic, nationally-based Inter-Religious Councils (IRCs), made up of men and women of diverse faiths working to build peace at every level of society. The role of *Religions for Peace* in this capacity is to assist the IRCs in establishing their own infrastructure and to share with them the tools they need for advocacy, conflict transformation, community mobilization and leadership. Every IRC is different, but they share the common goal of breaking down the hatred and fear that lead to – and are often the result of – war. They have achieved amazing successes in numerous areas, from helping to end bloody conflicts, to brokering peace accords for Sierra Leone and Liberia and passing new legislation in Bosnia-Herzegovina that provides religious rights to individuals and communities.

“Through the work of our IRCs, Religions for Peace has mitigated seemingly intractable conflicts, averted imminent violence and addressed some of the causes and consequences of conflict,” notes Angela Oliver, director of the Conflict Transformation Program.

The national IRCs have built a strong leadership base in their own countries and now collaborate at the regional level to share good practices, support each other in their work and carry out joint advocacy campaigns on common issues. The

result is a global multi-faith network of men and women who have access to millions of people – leaders and laypersons alike – and who can collaborate to guide processes of peace-building.

Religions for Peace Women's Mobilization Program

Religions for Peace recognizes that women of faith around the world have enormous capacities for leadership and effective action in all areas of human development – particularly those that the organization emphasizes, including: conflict transformation, children's issues, development, disarmament and security, human rights and responsibilities and peace education.

Religions for Peace established the Women's Mobilization Program in 1998 to promote the role of religious women in international development, peace-making and post-conflict reconstruction. The two overarching aims of the program are to mainstream women of faith into all *Religions for Peace's* programs and activities and to ensure that women's concerns and perspectives are incorporated into overall planning, implementation and evaluation. In the course of achieving these aims, the Women's Mobilization Program realized that there has been no systematic method to document and evaluate religious women's groups and their organizational activities. Without such documentation, there is no mechanism to recognize and further assist these women in their unique contributions to peace-building.

In 2001, the program launched the first ever Global Network of Religious Women's Organizations. The network serves as a tremendous resource for women of all faiths; it helps them communicate and learn from each other and builds bridges between these faith-based organizations and major international agencies. At present, the Global Network includes more than 700 Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Indigenous, Sikh and Zoroastrian religious women's organizations. Some organizations in the network have a membership as large as 5,000 groups, while others have less than five.

In 2003, Women's Mobilization launched four regional women of faith sub-networks in Latin America and the Caribbean, South East Europe, South and Southeast Asia and West Africa, to expand the existing Global Networks' regional efforts. *Religions for Peace* helped create these sub-networks as part of its overall objective to strengthen regional inter-religious structures.

The Women's Mobilization Program continues to convene and train women religious leaders and representatives at local, national, regional and international levels to sharpen their leadership skills, enabling them to address major social challenges, including conflict transformation and AIDS-

affected children. Moreover, by encouraging women of diverse faiths to share experiences and skills, *Religions for Peace* facilitates multi-religious collaboration to deal with pressing social concerns.

Program Synergy: Integrating and Prioritizing Religious Women as Peacemakers

Women have become major players in the process of conflict transformation, reflecting their tireless and necessary presence. They have assumed leadership roles in their communities and in the higher levels of both state and religious institutions.

"It has become vital to include women's perspectives, experiences, and unique contributions," indicates Dr. William Vendley, Secretary-General of Religions for Peace.

The need for cooperation between the Conflict Transformation and Women's Mobilization Programs has become abundantly clear. The Inter-Religious Councils (IRCs), established through the offices of Inter-Religious Council Development and Conflict Transformation, have promoted women's activism from the outset by ensuring that women are active members and are included in the councils' decisions and developments. "Women's involvement in the IRCs is integral to strengthening these structures and the performance of their mandates," notes Angela Oliver, director of the Conflict Transformation Program.

In March 2002, the first example of synergy between the two programs took place in the form of an international consultation on "Religious Women, Children and Armed Conflict" in Cordoba, Spain. The consultation, the first of its kind to deal with these multiple challenges, was followed by gender training for religious leaders from Kosovo in September 2002, which took place in Macedonia.

In August 2003, *Religions for Peace* conducted a regional training session on "Religion, Women and Conflict in West Africa." The gathering, held in Sierra Leone, convened 20 women and four of their male counterparts from Liberia, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire for four days of intensive training.

Religions for Peace built on the momentum of these events by organizing a training session for women of faith and the organization's staff from Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina in October 2003. Under the auspices of the IRC of Bosnia-Herzegovina (IRC-BiH) and the IRC of Kosovo (IRC-K),

and with the support of *Religions for Peace*, 30 women from the Islamic, Orthodox, Catholic and Jewish communities of Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Southeast Europe staff of *Religions for Peace* came together in Sarajevo for an inter-religious training session, entitled, “Mobilizing Women for Peace.”

The gathering affirmed the role of faith in the process of reconstruction and community healing, and discussed ways to engage women in inter-religious cooperation. One of the accomplishments was the official formation of Women’s Working Groups in both Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo. As part of the IRC-BiH and IRC-K, these groups consist of nominated women representatives from different faith communities. *Religions for Peace* staff continues to work closely with the Women’s Working Groups in Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina to help them implement their projects and realize their goals.

True to its mission, *Religions for Peace* is building the capacity of women of faith to increasingly take on leadership roles to transform conflict and build just societies.





S E C T I O N 2

Regional Training on *Women,* *Religion and Conflict* in West Africa and Southeast Europe

Why Women of Faith in Conflict Transformation?

The combination of religion, women and conflict often invokes images of oppression, brutality and misogyny. From television screens to newspapers, the media publicizes images of women hidden behind burkas, stoned for religious sins or murdered in so-called “holy wars.” From West Africa to Southeast Europe, the world

has witnessed the rape and killing of women in conflicts. Indeed, gender-based violence has been used frequently throughout history as a means of subjugating the “enemy.” The horrific experiences and injustices women endure in conflict, some of them in the name of religion, are undeniable. Yet, the assumption that the link between religion, women and conflict is fundamentally detrimental to women is a generalization worthy of investigating – and disproving.

There is a potential for great diversity in women’s roles. Women are mothers and political activists, as well as religious believers. It is, therefore, erroneous to assume that the relationship between women, religion and conflict must necessarily be a negative or self-defeating one; doing so “ignores the complexity and variety, not only of religion itself, but of women’s agency.”¹ Women are often especially connected to war through its effects on family and loved ones. Throughout history, mothers have often had to send children off to war to fight and die for a cause. Often, especially in certain war-torn societies, “motherhood is understood...as a political occupation.”²

Faith-based conflict transformation relies on a belief that women of faith can be active participants in the processes of social change. Many of the principles behind conflict transformation today took root in the movements of “radical Catholicism” and “liberation theology.” Imprisoned women in El Salvador, for example, embraced certain ideas in their writings as a form of resistance, clandestinely disseminating their work through clergy around the region. By the same token, many religio-political movements or religious fundamentalist movements have empowered women as well. In both of these situations, “religion was actually mobilized for the sake of social transformation of one sort or another...there is no one way in which religion interacts with women and conflict...for some women, the essence of religion and social justice are one and the same. For others, one is in direct contradiction to the other.”³

The work of *Religions for Peace* in West Africa and Southeast Europe directly illustrates the many roles that women of faith play each day in their communities and how these roles can be part of the peace process.

Regional Trainings on Religion, Women and Conflict

Women of faith around the world are vital to the processes of healing, reconciliation and rebuilding their communities and nations. *Religions for Peace* supports women of faith in their call to action and works with both men and women to provide them with the tools they need to maximize their leadership potential. In 2003, *Religions for Peace* piloted

regional training sessions for women of faith in Southeast Europe and West Africa. Both inspired national and regional working groups that are replicating the training for men and women in their respective countries. Moreover, as a result of these trainings, participants have engaged in concrete actions to mitigate and mediate violence and address social injustice.

Religious concerns have shaped conflict to a larger degree in Southeast Europe than in West Africa. Nevertheless, faith-based conflict transformation trainings have proven to be tremendously effective in both places due to the deeply religious nature of many of the people and the strong commitment undertaken by the faith community to build peace. Thus, faith-based conflict transformation is effective, even in instances when the root causes of a conflict are not religious.

West Africa

From the 27th to the 31st of July 2003, 25 men and women of faith from Côte d’Ivoire, Liberia, Guinea, Ghana and Sierra Leone gathered in Freetown, Sierra Leone, for *Religions for Peace’s* innovative training on women, religion and conflict in West Africa. The purpose of this training was two fold: to share insights and lessons learned on multi-faith peace-building in the region; and to build participants’ skills in conflict transformation, leadership, media and advocacy, thereby strengthening existing women’s groups within the Inter-Religious Councils (IRCs) and promoting the emergence of new ones.

With the help of *Religions for Peace*, the IRC representatives used the four-day training in Sierra Leone to learn and practice these new skills in order to share them with their communities and religious leaders. Each of the five countries sent a team of four women and one man. The men’s presence was crucial in the training, as women’s leadership requires the active participation of their male counterparts.

A team of five local and international trainers facilitated the skills-based training sessions, divided into three parts:

- 1) Conflict Transformation
- 2) Communication and Leadership Skills
- 3) Media and Advocacy.

Two prominent non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the region attended the training on the last day to share best practices and strategize on regional collaboration. During the last session of the training, participants created national action plans and devised next steps to actualize them. Together, the group drafted a communiqué outlining their collective purpose and goals which was disseminated to government officials, civil society leaders, international agencies and diplomatic personnel. (See *Annex.*)

¹ Karam, Azza. 2002. *Women, War and Religion: An Overview* in Azza Karam, editor, *Religious Women, Children and Armed Conflict: Multiple Challenges, Unique Opportunities*. New York: World Conference of Religions for Peace.

² See Footnote 1

³ See Footnote 1

Ever since *Religions for Peace* established the first IRC in the region more than eight years ago, these five nations have continued to build a strong network at the state and regional levels. The IRCs in Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia have made tremendous progress in their respective processes towards peace. They have had key roles in the development of peace accords, negotiated with rebels for the release of child soldiers and helped rebuild communities. Their contribution to the peace process in Sierra Leone has been, according to President Alhaji Dr. Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, “immeasurable.” The new IRC in Ghana and the already established Forum of Religious Confessions in Côte d’Ivoire are using these experiences to strengthen their own capacities and activities.

In all five of the countries represented at the training in West Africa, the IRCs have established women’s desks dedicated to mainstreaming women into each of their program areas. In four of the five countries, the participants have started training other women’s groups and the IRCs themselves. Two months after the training, the Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone (IRC-Sierra Leone) established their first women’s desk. They started with leadership and mobilization training for women in Freetown and have since replicated the training in other parts of the country. The women have worked with the men in the IRC-Sierra Leone to play an equal role in the UN-based Truth and Reconciliation Commission, a mechanism to promote healing in the aftermath of human-rights abuses. In addition, they have used the advocacy skills they learned in the training to raise awareness in the country’s Parliament about women’s roles in nation-building.

A woman trainee from the IRC-Liberia stated:

“This training has changed my life completely. It has given me hope, although my country is full of hopelessness brought about by 14 years of darkness of war. When I go back to my country, I will do all I can to ensure that women of faith work together for peace.”

She later organized follow-up training in Liberia with members of the IRC-L to educate and promote peace within their communities. They helped plan and facilitate peace workshops in Monrovia for warring factions, civil society, internally displaced and refugee populations. They also took on a leadership role in the December 2003 solidarity visit to Liberia, which included IRC members from Guinea, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Côte d’Ivoire and *Religions for Peace* staff. They have played a significant role in educating rural communities about the Accra Peace Accord, ensuring that citizens are informed of their rights and responsibilities in reconstructing civil society.

The women from the IRC-Guinea had a chance to put the skills they learned in media advocacy to work prior to the 2003 presidential elections. Representatives from the government asked the leadership of the IRC-Guinea to serve on two commissions established to facilitate transitions following the elections. Using the skills they learned at the consultation, the women organized workshops and educated the public on good governance, human rights and dignity, community relations and non-violence in the post-election period. In addition, the women’s desk replicated parts of the regional training in their communities to transfer the skills they learned to their peers.

The Forum of Religious Confessions in Côte d’Ivoire established a women’s desk after the July training. The *Religions for Peace* regional office provided additional peace-building and empowerment training for the women in Côte d’Ivoire. The women and men who attended the regional training in July have since been conducting needs assessments in areas of the country controlled by warring factions. The women have taken on a leadership role, working alongside the men to mediate with stakeholders in the current conflict.

Collectively, the IRCs in West Africa are now at crucial juncture, where religious women leaders have become respected colleagues working for peace alongside their male peers. Recently, the IRCs established themselves as the West Africa Inter-Religious Coordinating Committee and are working together to reach communities and governments to advocate for peace, security and stability throughout the region. Now more than ever, there is a need to build on this momentum and to promote women’s participation and guidance in the process. To do this work, it is crucial to support women of faith towards advancing their skills in leadership, peace-building and advocacy.

Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo

A decade of intra-national conflicts in Southeast Europe destroyed social cohesion, with more than two million displaced people, weakened state authorities, soaring unemployment and a population struggling with the post-traumatic effects of war. Weakened institutions and social structures in the region have dramatically changed traditional gender roles. Women have been presented with new opportunities for leadership in the process of reconciliation and stabilization, as their communities struggle to rebuild themselves.

With support from *Religions for Peace*, the IRC-Bosnia-Herzegovina has spent the past decade building a self-sustaining inter-religious council. The council has made important contributions to the peace process by educating civil society on religious tolerance, peaceful coexistence and reconciliation, through radio programs, documentary films and publications.

From the 2nd to the 4th of October, 2003, *Religions for Peace* facilitated training for 30 women from the Islamic, Orthodox, Catholic and Jewish communities of Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina to come together for the first time since the end of the Balkan conflicts to affirm the role of faith in reconstructing and healing their respective communities, to seek avenues for multi-religious cooperation. The three-day training began with a tour of Sarajevo given by the women of Bosnia-Herzegovina to their guests from Kosovo, including visits to the Islamic, Serbian Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Jewish places of worship and a visit to a local non-governmental organization (NGO) that assists war widows. The experience was powerful for many of the women.

A participant from Kosovo observed: "It is emotional to be [back] in Sarajevo after 20 years and to realize that 10,000 people – 1,500 of them children – died on the same streets we are walking on today."

The following two days were filled with dialogue, group activities and skills training that focused on the vital role of religious women in peace-building. The women, who varied in ages and came from different backgrounds, shared stories of pain and loss due to the conflicts, and to the ongoing instability in their regions. The story-telling broke down many of the barriers caused by the war, as women saw their own experiences mirrored in those of former "enemies." This brought the women closer together and strengthened their shared desire to build an effective network for peace.

Participants from the two regions identified and are pursuing common priorities and potential projects to implement jointly, including a multi-religious booklet on the customs and traditions of all religions concerned; visits to religious communities during the holiday period; the building of an inter-religious women's group; and the organizing of a regional women's conference with representatives from several Southeast European countries. The women wrote a collective communiqué and developed national and regional action plans, which were disseminated to key stakeholders. (See *Annex*.) As the training came to a close, the women agreed to a follow-up meeting in the subsequent six months to continue regional dialogue and further develop their relationships and commitments to peace-building. They also formed Women's Working Groups in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, both supported by *Religions for Peace*.

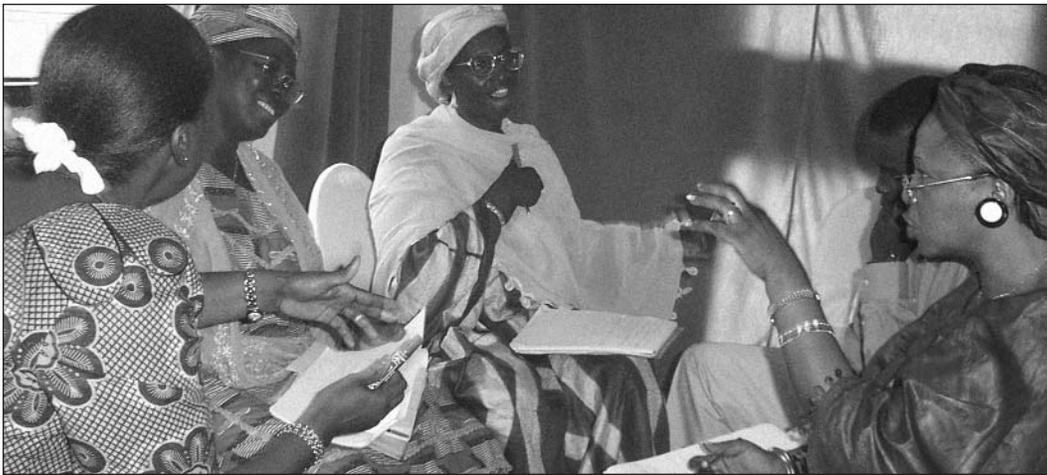
The courageous women of the IRCs of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo have been strong moral advocates for peace in times of conflict, leading all sectors of the population in the most challenging environments.

The Bosnian Women's Working Group has remained active since the training, meeting approximately every six weeks. The group initiated several joint projects from their action plans to assist vulnerable populations and strengthen the role of women in peace-building. For the first project, the women identified five families in need to receive humanitarian assistance. With support from *Religions for Peace*, the women's groups purchased food, clothing, books for children and medication to help the families. A multi-religious body from the Women's Working Group presented each family with the supplies and described the IRC's work and their commitment to multi-religious cooperation.

Soon after *Religions for Peace* established Kosovo Women's Working Group, the group responded to escalating violence by working with *Religions for Peace* to hold a meeting for the three women representatives from the Islamic, Orthodox and Catholic communities in the small Orthodox town of Gracanica. During this critical meeting, the women spoke of their commitment to build bridges of peace and to work together to improve life for themselves, their families and all the people of Kosovo, regardless of religious affiliation.

For their first project, the Kosovo Women's Working Group assembled a multi-religious delegation of women to visit each other's communities to extend hospitality and learn more about each other. The Islamic community first hosted a gathering for Bajram, the Islamic feast of Eid. This was followed by the Catholic community hosting a Christmas celebration in December, and the Orthodox community's celebration of Christmas in January. For most of the women, this was the first time they had been inside other religions' houses of worship since the conflict ended. These gatherings broke down barriers of fear and misunderstanding and engendered planning for joint projects with support from *Religions for Peace*.

The women of faith in West Africa and Southeast Europe will continue to play a major role in conflict transformation in their troubled regions. Processes of peace-building are complex and require the active contribution of both men and women in any society. In both of these regions, male religious leaders have worked side-by-side with women of faith, actively promoting and recognizing their important contributions. *Religions for Peace* is committed to providing ongoing training and promoting women's leadership.



S E C T I O N 3

Training Materials on Conflict Transformation, Leadership and Communication Skills and Media Advocacy

Conflict Transformation

Exercise 1: Icebreaker – Introductions and Creating a Sense of Solidarity

Objective: To create a comfortable atmosphere in which participants can express themselves freely and to identify some of the skills they want to learn in the training.

Materials:

Flip chart and markers.

Directions

Ask participants to find a partner (someone they do not know) and sit down with that person. Ask them to introduce themselves to each other and share the answers to two questions: (1) If you could change one thing about your communication skills, what would it be? (2) What tools do women of faith have already to help them become leaders in the process of peace-building? In the large group ask them to call out the skills their partner wanted to learn. Record their answers on two separate lists.

Key Points

Explain that they can develop any and all of the skills they listed, but the only way to do it is to practice the tools they will learn in the training. Use the metaphor of a great athlete who may be born with certain abilities, but has to practice and be tenacious in order to master the sport. The same is true with conflict transformation, communication and leadership skills.

Exercise 2: The Tools We Need To Resolve Conflict

Objective

To explore the meaning of conflict transformation for women of faith and to discuss some of the tools they can use to resolve conflict.

Materials

Flip chart and markers.

Directions

Divide participants into groups of six to eight (there must be even numbers). Ask each group to stand in a circle and hold hands. Explain that, at the moment, they could be an organization, a community or even a family, and by holding hands they are all “connected.” Ask one person in each circle to move around, walking, dancing, without letting go of hands. Watch for a moment as the other people in the circle are forced to move too. Point out that whatever one person does in this community, organization or family impacts the others, because they are all connected. Explain that this is the nature of conflict and peace. All it takes is one person to begin the movement, and others will have to follow.

Ask participants to let go of hands and take one step closer to the inner circle. Ask everyone to raise their right hand, reach across the circle and take one hand only of another person (not the person standing next to them in the circle). Then, ask them to do the same with their left hand, until they are all tied up in a human knot.

Explain that they are in a huge conflict, all tied up. Ask them to get out of it without letting go of hands. Let them try for a few minutes. If they can't do it, stop them and give them a rule to help them: Two people can let go of each other's hands, but must reconnect within three seconds. Also, everyone must agree to have them let go. They can't do it without the group's permission.

Key Points

After they are out of the knot, ask them to describe the skills they used to get out of this conflict/knot. Stress important skills, such as shared leadership, communication, co-operation, patience, analytical skills and laughter. Explain that these same skills are the ones they use to get out of the conflicts in their lives – both big and small. Remind them that although resolution may seem impossible (as it may have when they were first tied up in the knot), with work and tenacity it is possible to get out of almost any “knot.”

Exercise 3: What Is Conflict?

Objective

To help participants define and understand conflict.

Materials

Flip chart, markers, handouts on: (1) causes; (2) types; (3) themes; and 4) levels.

Directions

Ask participants to define conflict. Record their ideas on the flip chart and then present the dictionary meaning (insert the meaning, so they don't have to look it up) of the word and provide an explanation. Then, present the Latin interpretation of conflict, and ask participants to come up with negative and positive definitions of the word.

After reviewing, ask participants to discuss two questions:

1. How do women see and react to conflict differently than men? Discuss the impact of the conflicts in their countries and how it has impacted women.
2. What unique role can people of faith play in conflict transformation? Discuss the potential for religious leaders to mobilize the community and bring people together.

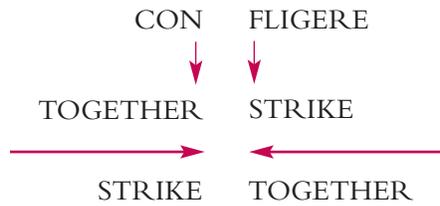
Key Points

Definitions of Conflict

The dictionary describes conflict in a number of ways, including, a state of opposition, fight or struggle, armed fighting/war, clash of feelings or interests, violent collision and a disagreement between two or more people.

Conflict = Striking Together

The Latin term for conflict, “con-fligere,” means striking together.



Causes of Conflict

The clashing or striking together of two ideas, values or beliefs may cause conflict. However, conflict itself has no inherent value. The value of conflict depends on how we choose to view it. We also choose how to react. If a person hurts another, for example, the one who has been hurt can choose to hit back, retaliate in some other manner or walk away. We may not choose whether or not to have conflict, but we do have power over how we understand and resolve it. Most of us handle conflict based on a cycle that begins with our beliefs and attitudes. Our beliefs and attitudes impact our behavior, which, in turn lead to results. The results reinforce our beliefs and attitudes. In order to change the results of a conflict, we first need to understand and control how we view it.

There are five common causes of conflict. They include:

- 1. Data** Information can be misconstrued and interpreted in a variety of ways, e.g., a dispute over facts.
- 2. Relationships** Methods of communicating vary and may cause misunderstanding or misjudgment, e.g., an overly aggressive or passive style of behavior may cause misinterpretation.
- 3. Interests** Differences in desired outcome, e.g., fighting over income, land and power.
- 4. Structural** Formal and informal power structures, e.g., hierarchy within an institution or government, policies.
- 5. Values** Principles, ethics, beliefs that people hold sacred, e.g., beliefs based on religion, ethnicity, culture and tradition.

Types of Conflict

Conflicts can be categorized into four different groups:

- 1. Intra-personal** Within oneself
- 2. Inter-personal** Between two or more people
- 3. Intra-group** Within one group
- 4. Inter-group** Between two or more groups

Themes in Conflict

The roots of conflict can be complex and are often based on more than one theme. They can be:

- Political
- Religious
- Armed
- Domestic
- Marital
- Internal
- Ethnic
- Professional
- Intergenerational

Levels of Conflict

Conflict typically escalates through three stages or levels. These include:

- 1. Primary** In the first stage of conflict, one or both parties feel uncomfortable or unhappy with the situation. The intensity of these feelings may vacillate, providing temporary reprieve from anger and frustration.
- 2. Secondary** As feelings of frustration ensue, the conflict escalates, leading one or both parties to act on their anger. If the conflict is not addressed in a healthy manner, the tension rises. In this stage, both parties tend to form strong opinions about each other.
- 3. Tertiary** This stage leads to crisis, when one or both parties become emotionally and/or physically aggressive. The relationship is damaged or severed.

Exercise 4: Responding to Conflict

Objective

To help participants understand how to work towards conflict transformation and how to achieve win/win solutions.

Materials

Flip chart, markers, handouts on: (1) the fight, flight and flow patterns of behavior and (2) ways to address conflict.

Directions

Explain the fight, flight and flow patterns to participants and ask them to evaluate the consequences of each of the three behaviors. After presenting the behavioral patterns described, below, ask participants two questions:

(1) What image does this person portray to others?

(2) What are the consequences of this approach and behavior?

After presenting the key points, ask participants how, as interfaith women, they have learned to resolve conflict. Ask them how they view conflict resolution differently than conflict transformation. Then, break the large group into smaller groups according to the country they represent. Ask each group to choose one aspect of their country's current conflict and define:

(1) The major parties involved in the conflict.

(2) The type of behavior (fight, flight or flow) each party has used to deal with the conflict. Ask each group to summarize their discussion for the larger group, and then ask them what they can do as religious leaders to help the parties achieve a win/win solution in the process of conflict transformation.

Key Points

Conflict Transformation vs. Conflict Resolution

For years, there has been much debate over the words we use to describe the processes of both conflict and peace. While the argument may seem incidental, our definition shapes the paradigm we accept for achieving peace, thereby changing the way we think and act in the process of dealing with conflict. The one indisputable point is that both conflict and peace are part of a process, a continuum of experiences that result in far more than the absence of violence. The term "resolution" means an agreement has been reached; the problem no longer exists and is part of the past. In contrast, "transformation" refers to the process through which society and individuals experience social, economic and political change as a result of resolution. That process, by its nature, is neither finite nor measurable. It is, in other words, an ever-changing progression that alters society for the better.

The Fight, Flight and Flow Patterns

There are many different ways to deal with conflict. While we can't control the way others handle conflict, we do have power over ourselves. Instead of relying on old patterns of behavior that may not work, try to choose new patterns that get you what you want and need. Consider three patterns for handling conflict:

1. The Fight Pattern Characterized by physical fighting and/or harsh language, the fight scenario always leads to a win-lose situation. The goal of this strategy is to defeat the opponent, without consideration of his/her feelings. People who handle conflict through an "I win/you lose" approach may think or say things like the following:

- "My needs, feelings and ideas are more important than yours."
- "I will say what I like and in the way I choose to say it."
- "I will use physical, emotional force or other means to get my way."
- "It doesn't matter if I hurt you in the process of getting what I want."
- "I enjoy confrontation and I am easily drawn into conflict."
- "I see conflict as a waste of time, and I need to deal with it quickly and efficiently."

2. The Flight Pattern This behavior may manifest in either passivity or withdrawal. A person may choose the flight pattern out of fear or intimidation and remain silent or acquiescent. This leads to an "I lose/you win" scenario. On the other hand, a person may refuse to engage in a conflict because it seems futile or fruitless. This decision may be the best alternative when negotiations fail; when there is a grave power differential; or when one party's safety is in jeopardy.

People who address conflict through an "I lose/you win" approach may think or say things like this:

- "My needs, feelings, ideas and rights are less important than yours."
- "I don't know how to express what I need, think and feel."
- "I don't want to hurt others or risk being hurt myself."
- "I will let you have your way."
- "My needs are often not met... I have to give them up."
- "I will avoid or withdraw from conflict by pretending to agree or removing myself from it physically."
- "I don't feel comfortable with conflict."

3. The Flow Pattern In this scenario, conflicting parties want to solve the problem. They are concerned with understanding and meeting each other's needs. The flow pattern requires that both parties listen to each other and be willing to compromise. The process leads to a "win/win" solution. People who practice this method may say or think something like this:

- "My needs, feelings and ideas are important. Yours are too."
- "I will express what I need, think and feel in an appropriate manner when the time is right."
- "I do not want to hurt others and I don't want to let them hurt me."
- "I respect myself, but I also respect you as an individual with needs, feelings, ideas and rights of your own."

- “I see conflict as a challenge and an opportunity for growth.”
- “I will approach conflict confidently, looking for strategies and solutions to meet both our needs.”
- “I believe it is important to cultivate an environment where we both feel safe.”

Participants’ Comments

Participants agreed that using the fight pattern can get them what they want in the moment, but they may have to deal with retaliation in the long term. They believed that there was no harm in the flight pattern, but that this was not the best method for solving their problems. Everyone in the group said that, when possible, the flow method works best because both parties feel that they have won, thereby reducing the risk of future retaliation.

Ways to Address Conflict

When you prepare a strategy to deal with conflict, remember that there are an endless number of options. Consider them all first, and then choose the one that is most likely to get you a win/win solution. The best strategy for you depends on several factors, including the nature of the conflict, power differentials, needs and the willingness of the other party to address the problem. The next time you are planning for resolution, consider these possibilities:

- **Advocacy** Organized group efforts to persuade or influence for a desired outcome.
- **Arbitration** Third-party decision-maker who listens to both sides and draws conclusions. An arbitrator may use mediation to help disputants reach their own agreement, however s/he may make the decision unilaterally.
- **Force** The use of power, threats, sanctions, ultimatums, violence, war, mental coercion, or armed conflict to achieve a desired solution. This method leads to grave suffering.
- **Reconciliation** One or more parties accept responsibility for the conflict and agree on a solution. Forgiveness is a key element in this process.
- **Mediation** A third party, who remains neutral, helps disputants process their problems and devise a win/win solution.
- **Counseling** An ongoing process by which individuals or groups seek professional help (religious, psychological) to understand their feelings and generate solutions to the problem.

- **Negotiation** Disputants seek to understand each other and generate solutions, usually without the help of a mediator or arbitrator.
- **Litigation or Adjudication** Solutions are generated by the due process of the law according to local, state or federal legal institutions.

Experiences from IRCs in Sierra Leone, Côte d’Ivoire and Guinea

Participant from Sierra Leone: “The IRC-Sierra Leone played a crucial role during the Lome peace talks. They established trust with all of the stakeholders to help mediate the conflict and negotiate the peace accords.”

Participant from Côte d’Ivoire: “It was a give-and-take situation with the rebels where we met 0. Everyone came together in the name of peace.”

Participant from Guinea: “The IRC Guinea played an important role in ensuring that elections were fair and without violence through dialogue between political parties. Every political party was tasked with the obligation to ensure peace.”

Exercise 5: Using the Past to Help You Strategize

Objective

To help participants create an effective plan for addressing conflict.

Materials

Flip chart, markers, handouts on experiential learning.

Directions

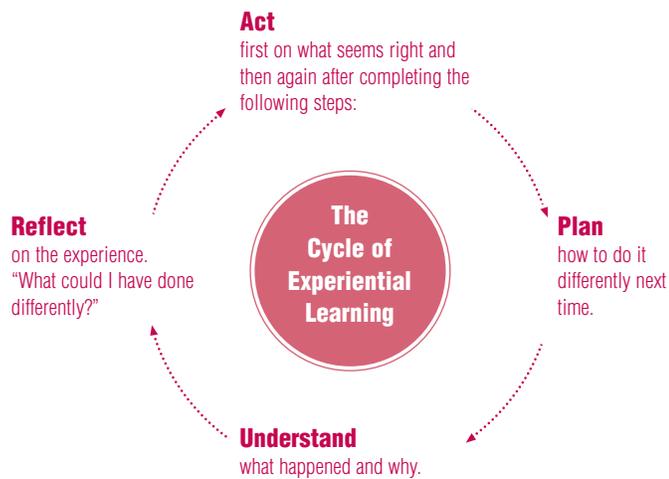
Break the group into pairs and ask participants to think of a conflict from their personal or professional lives that was not resolved well. Ask them to share the story with their partners and describe what they would do differently with hindsight. When they are done sharing, ask participants to raise their hands if they feel that they could handle the conflict better now. Discuss with them the importance of learning from our past conflicts and using our experiences to help us strategize new solutions. After presenting the key points, ask how their faith-based knowledge could help them reflect on their past experiences, and how it could help them plan for future conflicts.

Key Points

Dealing with Conflict Based on Experiential Learning

Research on adult learning styles shows that the combination of hands-on experience and reflection can transform the way we think and behave. During a conflict, we do not have the luxury of predicting the outcome. We can, however, reflect on it afterwards and use that information to handle it differently the next time.

Ask yourself, “What could I have done/said differently?” or “What could I do/say to illicit a different, more desirable response next time?” Managing conflict often requires trial and error. This process is called experiential learning.



Exercise 6: Mediation

Objective

To teach participants how to mediate between two conflicting parties.

Materials

Flip chart, markers, handouts on: (1) the introduction stage; (2) storytelling; (3) problem solving; (4) summary; (5) role-play situations.

Directions

Present the first two stages of mediation: the introduction and storytelling. Divide participants into groups of three. Give each group a problem (using examples in the handouts section or your own) and ask them to choose a mediator

and two disputants. Ask each group to role-play the first two stages, and then process their experiences. Present the last two stages of mediation: problem-solving and summary, and ask participants to continue the mediation, practicing the last two stages.

After processing the mediation in the large group, ask participants how their unique role as religious leaders can help them mediate. Ask them what obstacles they face in the role of mediators.

Key Points

A successful mediation consists of four stages. When planning a mediation exercise, take some time before you begin to think about the words you will use in each of the stages. Mediators often have to handle volatile individuals or groups. From the outset, you should know what you will do if you start to lose control of the situation. Most mediators go into a mediation prepared to stop the discussion and take a break or reschedule the meeting, if necessary. Don't be afraid to say something like, "I can see that everyone is very angry right now, and that we're not making much progress. Let's break for the day and meet again tomorrow." Good mediation is about maintaining control and empowering disputants to come up with their own solutions. The four stages include:

Stage I: The Introduction

Introductions help the mediator set the stage for a cooperative, safe environment. As the mediator, you should explain that your purpose is to help disputants resolve the conflict themselves; you are not there to take sides.

- A. Create a relaxed atmosphere with no tables between the disputants and mediator.
- B. Greet the disputants in a warm and friendly manner; try to put them at ease.
- C. Describe the process of the mediation (see below).
- D. Clarify your role by explaining that your job is strictly to facilitate a solution. Explain that you will not take sides or make decisions.
- E. Set ground rules by asking participants to generate commitments. You can add to their rules, but let them offer their ideas first.

Stage II: Storytelling

The storytelling stage gives the mediator an opportunity to understand the disputants and to help them understand each other. Your job as mediator is to assist the disputants by asking each person to speak and then by asking the listeners to repeat what they have heard. This is a very important step, because when one disputant is talking, the other(s) may be thinking

about what they want to say next, instead of listening. You are there to ensure that they listen to each other. You can start by something like: “I’m going to ask each of you to tell me how you see the problem. After the first person is done, I will ask the other person(s) to repeat what they have heard. Please don’t interrupt or object. We are just listening for now.”

A. Ask for one story at a time.

B. After one disputant has completed his/her story, ask the other(s) to paraphrase what they heard (See section on paraphrasing, page 30.) Try something like this: “Can you (to Disputant A) tell me what you heard (Disputant B’s name) say?”

C. Once the disputants have paraphrased each other, ask open-ended questions to clarify the problem. If one disputant becomes hostile, be sure to maintain control over the situation by interjecting: “I see (to Disputant B) that you are very upset, and I want to give you a chance to voice what you are thinking, but right now I ask that you listen to (Disputant A’s name) and try to understand what s/he is saying.”

D. When you are sure that the disputants have listened to each other, briefly summarize the problem. You can begin by saying something like: “Now that we have listened to each other, it seems to me that (Disputant A’s name) is angry because (state the reason), and (Disputant B’s name) is upset because (state the reason)... Is that right?”

E. Now, it’s time to put the ball in their court. Ask the disputants to speak to each other. You can say something like: “Would you please tell each other what you think/feel about what you heard?”

F. List the core issues, based on the disputants’ discussion on a flip chart, so they can see the summary of what they have discussed.

Stage III: Problem-Solving

This stage can be the most complex and volatile part of the process. As the mediator, your goal is to help disputants work through one issue at a time. Before helping disputants brainstorm solutions, take stock of what they have done so far. Review the key issues, highlighting only the most important problems. Acknowledge the progress the disputants have made; remind them that there are many possible answers to the problem and that they will each have to give something in order to reach a win/win solution.

A. Review the list of issues and ask the disputants to help you prioritize them. Distinguish between long- and short-term problems. Record their answers on a flip chart, so they can see which issues they need to resolve first.

B. Highlight issues that disputants agree are important. Circle or put a check mark next to the concerns they share.

C. For each issue, ask the disputants to brainstorm possible solutions. Remind them that the goal of a brainstorming session is to list all the possibilities, without rejection or discussion. After recording all their ideas, ask them to choose solutions that would best meet both their needs. When they come to an agreement, write it down on a blank flip chart page to prevent any misunderstanding of the solution.

Stage IV: Agreement Stage

The purpose of this stage is to ensure that disputants understand their agreement and have a plan of how, when and where to implement the solution. Before the mediation ends, ask the disputants to sign their agreement and make plans for a series of follow-up meetings to monitor progress.

A. Review the solution to make sure it is SMART:

Specific
Measurable
Achievable
Realistic
Time-bound

B. Prepare a plan for implementation, specifying persons responsible for specific tasks and deadlines.

C. Ensure that the agreement is clear and realistic.

D. Decide on a process to monitor progress. Most mediators schedule check-in meetings with disputants on a regular basis, with the understanding that disputants may need help implementing their responsibilities and meeting deadlines. The check-in meetings are important because they reinforce disputants’ commitment to the solution.

E. Write the agreement or draw up a contract with disputants’ signatures.

Participants’ Comments

The role-play was a positive experience for the participants. Both facilitators and participants noted several tips for future mediation:

- *The mediator should summarize disputants’ stories.*
- *During the storytelling stage, the mediator should not allow abusive language or insults.*
- *If tension rises between disputants, the mediator should separate them and talk to each one separately.*
- *The mediator should always remain neutral, regardless of his/her opinion.*

Exercise 7: Trauma Healing

Objective

To provide participants with sources of healing for individuals and communities suffering from the trauma of war.

Materials

Handouts on: (1) types of trauma and (2) trauma healing.

Directions

In small groups, ask participants to identify three wartime traumatic events that their communities struggle with most. Present the key points, and ask them to return to their small groups and choose healing mechanisms that they will try to create in their communities when they return home.

Key Points

Trauma is a condition that causes severe physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual pain and shock. Many people who are traumatized have difficulty talking about their experiences; yet trauma does not go away without confronting it, accepting it and finding a way to process it that allows one to live freely.

Two Types of Trauma

Specific trauma

Experienced in a certain moment, time period or event.

Chronic trauma

A continuous state of fear, anxiety and anger caused either by an ongoing experience or by the memory of one. Many people experience trauma long after the event has ended, a state known as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Trauma Healing

There are many options for dealing with trauma. Most people require a variety of interventions, including:

Medical Care

Medical professionals can help survivors of rape, sexual abuse and other forms of torture. This should be the first step in dealing with any kind of trauma, because it is almost impossible to get to the psychological impact if the person is in a physical state of emergency. For rape victims this is crucial, as there is the risk of STDs or pregnancy; and if they want to press charges, medical evidence must be collected within 72 hours of the event.

Counseling

Therapists and counselors give individuals and groups the tools they need to work through the fear, anger and loss that most trauma survivors experience. Counselors cannot heal their clients, but they can help them empower themselves.

Prayer

Religious community leaders can guide survivors in prayer through healing services in churches, mosques and temples. This can bring solace and support to people who feel a sense of hopelessness and despair as a result of their experiences.

Informal Sharing

Groups of men, women and children can meet informally on a continuous basis to share their feelings and to support one another. As long as the tone of these meetings is one of compassion and support, these types of gatherings can bring great power and healing to communities.

One regional women's organization in West Africa, the Women in Peace-Building Network (WIPNET), joins women in communities for "Bring and Shares." Women meet in a safe place, sit in a circle and place a large bowl of water with candles around it. They take turns sharing their stories and expressing their emotions. When everyone is done speaking, they wash their own hands and the hands of the woman sitting next to them in the bowl to signify the washing away of their pain and the solidarity they have as a group.

Objective

To help participants plan for peace-building activities when they return home.

Materials

Flip chart, markers.

Directions

Ask participants to consider the meaning of peace in transitional societies, and discuss some of the challenges and means for achieving peace in their countries. Through the discussion, help them generate ideas that they can use when they return home. You can use the following questions to guide your discussion or make up your own:

- What is peace in transitional societies?
- What challenges will you face as women religious leaders when your return to your respective countries?
- How can you break the silence in the face of cultural constraints?
- Where do you draw the line between religion and politics?

Key Points

Peace

Peace cannot be defined simply as the absence of conflict; it is a constructive process in which people express and meet their needs and the needs of others non-violently.

Participants' Comments

What is peace in transitional societies?

It's restful environment, acceptance of compromise, justice, maximum security, recognition and respect for a community's political, social and economic rights, tolerance, truth, forgiveness, repentance, meeting society's basic needs, reconciliation and accountability.

What are the challenges you will face as women religious leaders when your return to your respective countries?

(1) Addressing the causes of conflict; (2) creating a dialogue; (3) generating local solutions; (4) bringing victims and offenders together; and (5) having our skills and leadership recognized.

Question

Participant: "In my country, there is now a call for religious organizations to remain non-partisan. Where does the religious community draw the line between being political and non-political? Should members of religious institutions remain non-political, or should they raise issues and hold their governments accountable?"

Facilitator: "Religions, while non-political, have tremendous potential, some would say an obligation, to address the challenges that face humankind in the political and civil arenas."

Leadership and Communication Skills

Exercise 1: What is Leadership?

Objective

To engage participants in a discussion about the meaning of leadership and the skills necessary to be an effective leader.

Materials

Flip chart, markers, four blank pieces of paper, masking tape and handouts on: (1) definitions of leadership; (2) the principles of leadership; (3) types of power; and (4) religious leaders.

Directions

In the large group, ask participants to name the most important skill or characteristic of a religious leader. Write the first four things you hear on a separate piece of paper. Then, tape each paper in a corner of the room. Ask participants to stand up and go to the corner they feel has the paper with the most important skill or characteristic for leadership. Starting with one corner, ask participants to

explain why that characteristic or skill is so important. Let the other participants respond. After each group has spoken, point out that all these characteristics lead to the others and that there is no one answer to the question; there are many. Explain that if they want to improve their leadership skills, the question for them is which skill or characteristic should they start working on in their own lives. Then, review the key points on leadership.

After you have reviewed the points on leadership, ask participants to write down two values of religious persons. Record these on the flip chart, and discuss the unique role of religious leaders.

Present the on religious leaders.

At the end of the discussion on leadership, ask participants two questions:

1. Think about a particular situation that troubles you in your life. What do you think God wants you to do?
2. What current problem in your country could you help solve? What can you do as a leader? What is your vision?

After they have had time to think about it, ask participant to break into small groups and share their answers.

Key Points

Definitions of Leadership

Hierarchical leadership is prevalent in most formal institutions, such as the military, religious congregations, corporations, organizations; and in informal groups, among peers and in social situations. Those in formal leadership roles, however, are not necessarily the only leaders in an organization or group. Other people who have leadership skills emerge as strong voices, and people want to follow and listen to them. These informal leaders may not have decision-making power, but people respect them and often believe in their vision. The age-old question of whether people are born or become leaders is a mystery; however, most of us know leadership when we see it, and we can all improve our leadership skills. Here are a few definitions of leadership:

- A process of influencing group activities towards a goal.
- Taking control of a group.
- Directing and managing.
- Setting good examples for others to follow.
- Having the ability to assemble, direct and serve others.
- Having the ability to sensitize and lead the way/mobilize.
- Setting goals.
- Being attentive and tolerant.
- Knowledge of how to communicate a message.

Principles of Leadership

- Have a plan and learn how to communicate it
- Supervise the people you are leading by finding out what they need
- Monitor progress
- Take responsibility
- Listen and communicate
- Learn how to follow and let others lead
- Mobilize individuals and groups towards a common goal
- Be charismatic
- Be confident
- Set an example for others to follow
- Act with maturity and humility
- Be tenacious
- Be tactful and innovative
- Create a vision
- Act with honesty and integrity
- Know yourself

Types of Power

Power is defined as having the authority to accomplish goals or act in a desired manner. For many people, the idea of power conjures up notions of brutality, hegemony and selfishness. However, it is important to remember that there are various types of power: some that denote force and cause suffering and others that refer to strength and leadership.

Power over: A relationship whereby one person has control over another based on threats of violence or intimidation.

Power to: The ability and/or authority to make decisions.

Power with: Rooted in the understanding that power must be shared and cannot be controlled solely by one person.

Power within: This is the basis for all other types of power; it comes from life's experiences. It is the source of belief in our capabilities and strengths.

Religious Leaders

Religious leaders have some or all of these skills and characteristics. In addition, they have several unique qualities

that may not be shared by leaders in other institutions. These attributes include:

- Belief in God
 - Transparency
 - Fairness
 - Patience
 - The belief that you should not judge others
- Leadership starts with the individual on a personal level. Religious leaders are inspired by their understanding of what a Greater Power has intended for the world and how these ideas manifest themselves in different religious texts.
- Start by developing your own skills and your own vision to better your community and the world
 - Set realistic goals
 - Strategize to mobilize society for social change
 - Share your vision with other leaders and with your community

Exercise 2: What Do You Need to Be a Good Communicator?

Objective

To strengthen participants' communication skills

Materials

Flip chart paper divided in half (vertically) with a line, markers.

Directions

Ask participants to find a partner and to tell that person their strongest communication skill as a religious leader and the communication skill they feel is most important for a religious leader. Label half the flip chart page "What We Have," label the other half "What We Need." Ask for responses in the big group and record their answers on a flip chart. As you record the "What We Need" answers, ask the group to raise their hands if they too would like to work on this skill. Present the key points.

Key Points

Effective Communication

When we communicate, we send messages through words and actions. We hope that people will respond. To receive a response, we need to first ensure that our message is understood. The sender must be clear and concise. The receiver's job is to listen for the facts and interpret what s/he has heard. Miscommunication occurs for one of two reasons: either people don't understand our message or they don't like/agree

with what we are saying. In this sense, communication is not only about making yourself heard or understood; it's about first understanding others and the message they have for you. The secret to opening the channels of communication is to stop trying to communicate your ideas. Instead, try to focus on what the other person is saying and identify his/her needs. When a person feels you are making the attempt to communicate she/he tends to reciprocate.

Exercise 3: Assertive Communication

Objective

To give participants the necessary tools to communicate their needs and reach win/win solutions.

Materials

Flip chart, markers and handouts on: (1) assertive communication; and (2) nine steps to communicating assertively.

Directions

Ask participants to find a partner and put their hands, palms up, against each other. Tell them that you are going to ask one person in the pair to do something. Ask the pairs to push against each others' hands until they feel tension. Then, ask the person assigned to do something to ease up (without taking their palms down) and move his/her hands around. (Note: The person who stops pushing will find that s/he controls the movement of the other person's hands.)

Ask participants in the large group: "Who had the control the person who was pushing or the person who let go?" Explain the metaphor: if we push, our opponent will push back. If we yell, our opponent will yell louder. If we draw a line, our opponent will cross it. The aggressive response almost never gets us what we need.

It is not passive to give up control; it is passive to give in completely. In our communication, we want to find a balance between passive and aggressive communication. This is called assertiveness.

After you have explained the metaphor, review the key points, and ask participants to call upon religious teachings from their own specific traditions that may highlight the importance of acting without force.

Key Points:

Assertive vs. Aggressive Communication

Nine Steps to Assertive Communication

1. Use "I" statements.
2. Keep responses short.
3. Slow down verbally.
4. Deepen your voice.
5. Monitor your tone of voice.
6. Watch nonverbal messages.
7. Listen.
8. Maintain eye contact.
9. Sort your emotions from your thoughts.

Assertive	Aggressive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stand up for rights • Express feelings and thoughts • Express needs in an open, honest way • Respect others • Look for win/win solutions • Maintain self confidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manipulate • Blame others • Act superior • Act selfishly • Use threats or coercion • Seek "I win/you lose" solutions

Exercise 4: Active Listening

Objective

To teach participants active listening skills that can help them communicate more effectively

Materials

Flip chart paper divided in half (vertically) with a line, markers, and handouts on: (1) the goal of active listening; (2) listening techniques; (3) eight steps to active listening.

Direction:

Ask participants to turn to the person sitting next to them and tell them how they know when a person is not listening. Ask them to think of verbal and nonverbal cues that show them a person is tuning out. Divide a flip chart page and write "verbal" and "nonverbal" on each side. In the large group, ask participants to brainstorm verbal and nonverbal skills to show someone that you are listening.

After reviewing the key points, ask participants to find a new partner. Ask them to decide who in their pair will speak first. Give the speakers one minute to tell their partner about a problem they currently have or had in the past as a religious leader. The listener should practice all the skills he/she has learned. Then switch, so that the listener speaks.

When the exercise is complete, ask the group how it felt to talk and to listen. Ask them two questions: (1) Why don't we normally listen to each other like this in everyday life? (2) What have you learned as religious leaders about how to listen to people? Explain that effective communication depends on our ability to truly listen to the other person. Religious leaders, by virtue of who they are, often have the trust of their followers. Many of us view religious leaders as people who can listen to our problems and give us advice. Remind participants that, in a conflict, our role is not to give advice; it is to first understand the other person's perspective and needs and then to express our needs.

Key Points

The Goals of Active Listening:

- Get the facts.
- Understand the message.
- Understand the reasons for specific behaviors and emotions.
- Make valid judgments.
- Empathize.
- Mediate.
- Seek solutions.

Listening Techniques

Listening is the first step toward resolving conflict. Actively listening helps peacemakers to identify facts, feelings, needs and intentions.

We have to listen with our ears, but also with our bodies so that the speaker knows we are trying to understand him/her. People do not often tell us what is truly hurting them. Our job when listening is to look for the hidden message behind the words. For example, if a person is angry and threatens to hurt anyone who challenges his/her power, think about what might be causing him/her to act aggressively. Why would a person act that way? In this case the answer could be fear; the person is afraid of losing power and losing face, and is acting aggressively to protect him/herself.

When you are listening, don't:

- Fidget
- Take sides (especially in a mediation)
- Interrupt
- Show negative facial expressions
- Offer advice unless you are asked

Here's what you should do:

Technique	Purpose	What to Do
Encourage	To show interest and encourage the person to keep talking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't agree/disagree • Use neutral language • Vary tone of voice • Use open body language
Clarifying	To help you get clarity about what the person is saying and what s/he needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask open-ended questions • Don't interrogate • Focus on two or three main points
Reflecting	To show that you understand what the speaker is saying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paraphrase what you hear (see example, following)
Summarizing	To review progress and identify the most important ideas or facts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restate main problem(s) • Ask the person to prioritize the issues
Affirming	To acknowledge the person thank him/her for speaking candidly with you	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge the value of what he/she has said • Show appreciation for the person's actions

Paraphrasing

Ask participants to turn to the person sitting next to them and tell them how they know when a person is not listening to them. Ask them to think of verbal and nonverbal cues that show them a person is tuning out. Divide a flip chart page and write “verbal” and “nonverbal” on each side. In the large group, ask participants to brainstorm verbal and nonverbal skills to show someone that you are listening.

After reviewing the key points, ask participants to find a new partner.

The purpose of paraphrasing is to show the speaker that you are truly listening. People tend to repeat themselves when they are upset, because they believe that they are not understood. The combination of repeating what someone has said and showing empathy indisputably proves that you are listening and understand. To start a paraphrasing sentence, begin with something like: “So, what I hear you saying is...” Then, follow up that statement with three important words: “Is that right?” If you don’t ask that important question, you may misinterpret what the person is saying. Here’s an example:

- Speaker: “I resented it deeply when I found out that my peers had gone behind my back to the boss. Why can’t they talk to me directly?”
- Listener: “What I hear you saying is that you were hurt when your peers didn’t come to you directly. Is that right?”

Remember not to give your opinion or offer explanations. Your job is simply to show the speaker that you understand. Most importantly, remember to watch your tone of voice. You may feel offended or upset by what the person is saying (especially if s/he is angry at you), but at this stage your goal is strictly to understand the problem. Resolution can’t happen without it.

Eight Steps to Active Listening

1. Avoid distraction and interruption. You want to create an atmosphere that is calm and open, so try a few things: First, find a quiet place and make sure there are no desks or tables between you. Then, invite the person to sit down. This is important because towering over someone can make him/her feel intimidated. Try to be at eye level with the person who is speaking. Sitting down helps the body rest and slows the heart rate.
2. Give the person your undivided attention. If there are distractions, try to find a place that is quiet and private. Don’t listen to someone in the presence of others. It may be difficult for him/her to open up and speak honestly when other people can hear. If you don’t have the time or ability to listen, reschedule the talk for later. If that’s

not possible, explain to the speaker that you may be interrupted but that you will do your best to listen.

3. Use affirming nonverbal behaviors. Studies show that 85 to 90 percent of our communication is nonverbal. The messages you give with your body and facial expressions while someone is speaking show how you feel. Try to remember:
 - (a) eye contact;
 - (b) nodding;
 - (c) an open body posture;
 - (d) a neutral tone of voice.
4. Give acknowledgment to show the person you are listening. Use verbal cues like “uh huh” or “that sounds frustrating.”
5. Offer encouragement to help the person feel comfortable speaking candidly to you. You can say something like, “Can you tell me more about...X?”
6. Make brief notes either in your mind or on paper. If you choose to take written notes, explain to the speaker from the outset that you are only taking the notes for yourself. Assure him/her that you will not share the information with anyone else.
7. Summarize the problems as you understand them. Sometimes the person speaking is unclear as to the core issues. You can help the person get to the root problems by stating the two or three most important concerns.
8. Paraphrase throughout the discussion. This is the best skill you can use to show someone you are listening.

Look interested

Involve the person through eye contact

Seek to understand

Test understanding

Evaluate the message (what lies behind the words?)

Neutralize your own feelings

Exercise 5: “I” Messages

Objective

To teach participants a healthy way of expressing their needs and opinions without putting others on the defensive.

Materials

Flip chart, markers, slips of paper with statements, handouts on constructing “I” messages.

Directions

In the large group, ask participants to define “I” messages and ask them why it is important to use them in our communication. Review the key points, then ask for a volunteer to read a statement on a slip of paper and turn it into an “I” message. For example, on a slip of paper you could write:

“You are angry at a member of your IRC because s/he doesn’t listen to you when you speak.” Ask a volunteer to express that sentiment using an “I” message. For example, “I feel frustrated because I don’t feel heard.” Do several more of these exercises with other volunteers from the group.

Key Points

Why Use “I” Messages?

“I” messages are a mechanism for stating how you feel and expressing yourself assertively. They are most effective when you are feeling angry, irritated or upset because they keep the recipient of your communication off the defensive.

Think about it this way: if you are angry at your colleague and you say, “You are making me furious,” that person will more than likely tune you out. The recipient of your communication feels attacked and puts his/her defenses up for protection. As a result, your communication goes nowhere. Instead, think about keeping the pronoun “you” out of the initial statement. Also: think about using less offensive adjectives and adverbs to describe how you feel. Instead of “angry” you can say, “upset,” “disappointed” or “frustrated.”

Constructing “I” Messages

Before communicating, take a few moments to think about what you are going to say. We often consider our words and actions in hindsight and wish we had handled miscommunications differently. When possible, take a few moments and script your statement in your head. A strong “I” message consists of four steps:

1. “I feel...” (State how you feel)
2. “When...” (State the action that you don’t like. Try to keep the word “you” out of it.)
3. “I know...” (Explain why you think the person is doing it. Remember that sometimes a person doesn’t realize s/he is doing something that annoys you.)
4. “What I would like is...” (State a specific action.)

Let’s say, for example, that your colleague constantly interrupts you in meetings. You realize s/he is doing it on purpose, but it embarrasses and frustrates you. You could burst through the door of his/her office and say, “You’d better stop interrupting me; it’s driving me crazy.” As you may guess, this probably won’t get you the results you want.

Instead, try using the four steps, above: “I feel frustrated when

I am interrupted at a meeting. I know that you don’t realize you are doing it, and that you have a lot to say. What I would like is that, in the future, you let me finish my sentences.”

Exercise 6: Dealing With Your Anger

Objective

To give participants methods of controlling and expressing their anger.

Materials

Flip chart, markers, balloons and handouts on tips for dealing with anger.

Directions

Ask participants to close their eyes and recall a time when they were angry at someone. Ask them to turn to the person sitting next to them and describe how they felt physically when they were angry. In the large group, review the negative effects that anger can have on our physical and emotional health: hypertension, stomachaches and headaches, depression, nausea, etc. Tell participants that it is perfectly normal to get angry. Like conflict, anger is inevitable. If, however, we don’t find ways to let go of our anger, it can damage us severely, both emotionally and physically. Most of us have triggers or buttons that cause us to lose our temper. These buttons can be words, actions, attitudes or beliefs. The first step in managing anger is to have an awareness of our buttons. The second step is to learn new ways of reacting when those buttons are pushed.

Ask all the participants to blow up a balloon and have half of them tie their balloons in a knot. Ask the other half to pinch the top closed without tying it. Ask the ones who have tied the knot to pop the balloon. Ask the other half of the room how that sounded and if it reminded them of someone losing their temper: a loud, scary noise. Then, ask the other half of the room to slowly let the air seep out of their balloons. Ask the others how that sounded and if it reminded them of a whiny, negative person complaining and screeching. Explain that if we do not think about how to deal with our anger, if we keep it inside, it explode (pop) or come out slowly (seeping air) in all kinds of negative ways.

Next, tell participants that together they are going to come up with some healthy ways to manage anger and that each of them will leave the training with new ideas that they can try in their own lives. In small groups, ask them to generate a list of things they can do and to draw upon the values and teachings they have learned through their spiritual relationship with God. Write their ideas on a flip chart and add your ideas from the key points. When you are finished with your list, ask each participant to write down three things they will try in their own lives when they leave the training.

After each participant has finished his/her list, ask them to think of one common situation they face as religious leaders

that angers them. For example, it may be dealing with political officials who don't want them to be involved in the peace process. Ask them how they will deal with it the next time it happens so that they don't let their anger get in the way of their work.

Key Points

Tips for Dealing with Anger

1. Be aware of your anger. Think about why you are angry and accept that you feel it. Make a plan to express it.
2. Meditate or use relaxation techniques to calm your body and mind.
3. Talk to a friend who cares about you and whom you can trust.
4. Take a time out if you feel you are about to lose control. Explain to the person that you care about the situation, but that you need some time to take a walk or think things through.
5. Use "I" messages to explain how you feel without attacking the other person.
6. Don't fight when someone puts you down. A well-known civil rights and religious leader, Martin Luther King Jr., once said, "Never let a man pull you so low as to hate him." Rise above an emotional attack by saying something like, "I understand that you are angry, but why would you want to say that to me?"
7. Create an action plan that specifically addresses what you will do about the person or problem that has caused your anger. Often, we feel angry because we feel powerless. Having a plan gives us some control over the situation.

Forgive the person who has angered you, either by telling him/her or by doing it in your own mind and heart. Many of us have a hard time forgiving, yet we know that holding on to anger hurts us – not the people who angered us. People of faith may call upon a higher power to help them forgive. A well-known American psychiatrist, Matthew McKay, suggests that in order to forgive another human being, you must first understand why s/he hurt you. Usually, the person's actions were not about you but about his/her own pain. Understanding, says McKay, leads to compassion; and we need compassion in order to forgive.

Exercise 7: Dealing With Other People's Anger

Objective

To give participants tools for calming down irate people.

Materials

Flip chart, markers, handouts on: (1) dealing with angry people; and (2) three steps for diffusing anger.

Directions:

Divide participants into small groups and give them a case scenario of an irate person with whom they might deal. For example, explain that leaders of a rebel group have agreed to meet with them. When they sit down together, the rebels automatically take a defensive position and berate the women for meddling in the problem. The rebels say that religious leaders have no business interrogating them. The atmosphere becomes very tense. Ask each group to decide what they would do in this situation.

After each group has explained their approach, generate a list in the large group of actions they could take to calm down angry people. Include the suggestions in the key points.

Key Points

Dealing with Angry People

1. Use common sense to assess the situation by asking yourself what the other person's needs are; why s/he has reacted this way; and whether your safety may be in jeopardy. If you think you are in danger, find an excuse to leave, ask permission to leave or explain why you are leaving. The bottom line is that your well-being is the most important factor, and you must do everything possible to protect yourself. It is always a good idea to go into a potentially volatile situation with a safety plan.
2. Let the person know you care by assuring him/her that you want to listen and understand.
3. Choose a safe place to talk. If the situation could be volatile, try to meet in a place where you could access help immediately. If you think that you are safe, try to choose a private place on neutral territory.
4. Don't argue, even if you think s/he is wrong. First, calm them down; you can discuss the validity of their anger later.
5. Observe the person's body language, watching for facial expressions, a change in skin color, his/her willingness to make eye contact, etc. This will tell you a lot about how s/he is feeling.
6. Observe your own body language, making sure that you walk confidently and speak in a clear and resounding voice.
7. Be aware of your tone of voice and how you say things.

8. Observe the golden rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.
9. Determine the direction of the anger by listening to what s/he is saying. This person may not be angry at you, but is aiming it at you.
10. Ask the person what s/he would do in your shoes to help him/her understand your perspective.

Three Steps for Diffusing Anger

1. *Listen*: Allow the speaker to vent his/her feelings by using active listening skills.
2. *Connect*: Put aside your own thoughts and focus on the speaker's needs.
3. *Respond*: Paraphrase what the person has said and remember not to get defensive.

Empathy vs. Sympathy

Emotions run high in communications, particularly in conflict. We feel our own emotions acutely, yet often we can also identify with the feelings of others. If a person is crying, most of us feel a twinge of sadness or concern. This feeling is called sympathy; it results from feelings generated in the listener, and it often leads to an opinion about the person or situation. You might look at the person crying and think, "S/he has been wronged by someone awful. That's terrible." Or you might form an entirely different opinion: "S/he is simply feeling sorry for him/herself." Sympathy can be an obstacle to resolving conflict, because our opinions and judgments of the person and situation may obscure our ability to communicate effectively.

To bring clarity to communication, we need empathy. Unlike sympathy, empathy excludes opinion or judgment.

Empathy is a cognitive, as opposed to an emotional, understanding of how another person feels and thinks. This doesn't mean that a person's behavior can't evoke an emotional response in us; sometimes we can't control our feelings. What it means is that we refrain from a qualitative (good vs. bad) measure of that person or his/her behavior. When you're looking at a person who's crying, an empathetic thought might be something like this: "She is crying because her boss yelled at her in front of her colleagues. That makes her feel angry and embarrassed." Remember that empathy has nothing to do with how you would feel if you were in that person's position. You might not care at all if your boss yelled at you. The point of

empathy is simply and only to understand how the other person is feeling.

Exercise 8: Learning Compassion Through Storytelling

Objective

To give participants a tool for creating compassion between oppositional inter-religious groups.

Materials

A separate break-out room, so that participants can have privacy.

Directions

Ask participants to find a partner of a different religion and to share a personal experience from the conflict in their countries. Remind the group to use the listening skills they learned in a previous session.

When they are done, ask the big group how it felt to listen to the other person's story. Were they surprised? Did they find similarities in their stories and the way the events impacted their lives?

Key Points

Dealing with Angry People

In conflict, we rarely have information about our opponents' pain and suffering. Sharing stories and experiences breaks down barriers and builds trust. This process leads to compassion – a requirement for reconciliation and transformation. Religious leaders can bring people of different faiths in their own communities together to share in a similar exercise.

Experiences of women of faith from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo

The training of open dialogue allowed us to explore our thoughts and dreams for a better future. Some women spoke very openly about their despair and hopelessness. However, it became evident that, after our time together, we had begun to build strong relationships of mutual understanding. This was also the first time we had met and had the opportunity to learn from each other's faith traditions and experiences. We have forged a lasting partnership, working for peace with justice.

Media Advocacy

Exercise 1: How the Media Operates

Objective

To give participants an overview of how print and electronic media function.

Materials

Flip chart, markers, handouts on: (1) understanding the media; and (2) roles of the media.

Directions

In the large group, find out how many participants have had any media training. Ask several provocative questions to encourage them to think about the value and potential dangers of working with the media. For example: (1) Think of a public concern or issue on which the media has raised public awareness. How have they done it? (2) Think of a person whose life has been exploited or impacted negatively by the media. (3) Think of an issue that the media has ignored that is extremely important to the social or economic well-being of a population. Why has this happened? (4) How has the media portrayed the role of religion in conflict in your countries? Through these questions, generate a discussion about the power the media can have in changing the way people think and act. Then, explain the key points.

Key Points

Understanding the Media

The goal of the media is to inform, educate and entertain the public. Most of the information we receive from the media reaches us through print or electronically. If you want to work with the media, you must understand three basic components:

- 1. Deadlines.** Stories must be submitted for publication by a specific date and time.
- 2. Gatekeepers.** Television, newspaper and radio editors determine which stories to publicize.
- 3. Business.** The media is a profit-generating institution. The industry's primary goal is to make money from advertising and sales. Media professionals measure popularity through ratings. Advertisers use two main tools to decide which publication or production will reach their target audiences: (1) ratings; and (2) reach (the geographical area accessed through the production or publication).

Roles in the Media

The process of writing and producing a story requires reporters and editors. The main players in the process include:

- Reporters – get the story.
- Subeditors – decide whether the story can be published.
- Editors – give final approval.
- Features editors – edit feature stories by columnists.
- News editors – edit content and grammar of news items.

Audiences play the most important role in the media, because they ultimately determine whether the publication or production will succeed. If, for example, few people listen to a new radio show in Sierra Leone, advertisers won't have an incentive to pay the radio station for ads, and the radio station will lose funding for programming. Revenue from advertisers largely determines publication and production budgets. Advertisers seek programs and publications with a wide reach to expose their product to the largest geographic market possible, with the greatest number of patrons.

Exercise 2: Making News

Objective

To teach participants the types of stories that make the news, so that they gain media attention for their work on peace-building.

Materials

Flip chart, markers, handouts on: (1) what makes news; and (2) how religious women can make their stories newsworthy.

Directions

In small groups, ask participants to think of a recent news story that stands out in their minds and share the story with their colleagues. When they are done, ask if any of them had chosen the same stories. Initiate a discussion by asking them what makes a story newsworthy. Ask them to imagine that they are reporters. What kinds of stories would they look for? What kinds of topics related to religious peace-building efforts would be interesting to the public?

Present the key points, then ask participants to go back into the small groups they were in at the start of the session. Ask each group to brainstorm topics to pitch to editors on the work of inter-religious women as peace-builders. Suggest that they think of topics that cover first-time events, celebrations, profiles of women leaders, op eds, controversial beliefs and human interest-stories. Write all the topics on the flip chart and suggest that they choose at least two to work on when they return to their countries.

Key Points:

What Makes News?

The bottom line is that most people want controversy. In journalism, there is a saying that if a dog bites a man, there's no news, but if a man bites a dog – well, that's news. If you want to get the media's attention, try these tactics:

- 1. Submit a press release on a story that is timely.** If something newsworthy is about to happen, contact the press immediately. Also, look for opportunities to pitch ideas that coincide with other major news stories.
- 2. Include important people.** Invite a highly ranked government official or celebrity to a meeting to gain the media's attention. Consider, for example, the public-relations value of organizations that ask major celebrities to be their goodwill ambassador; the celebrity appearances gain the media's attention. Remember, the media business is showbusiness.
- 3. Be controversial.** The press looks for people and positions that are adversarial, shocking and innovative. Be careful not to sensationalize; the media may pick up the story, but the publicity can back fire.
- 4. Transform pedestrian topics into something unique.** The press probably won't come to a meeting of inter-religious women who are gathering to discuss peace-building. Instead, think of ways that can make the event into something bigger. Describe it to the media as “the first meeting in the history of Sierra Leone to bring Christian and Muslim women to the peace table.”

How Can Religious Women Make Their Stories Newsworthy?

While religion touches all our lives, the subject itself is common and not usually newsworthy. As members of religious organizations, here are a few things you can do to get your group or organization the media attention you want:

- 1.** Strengthen your institution, so that the general public is familiar with who you are and what you do.
- 2.** Speak out by standing up in public forums and challenging issues you feel are not right. Petition, march and organize demonstrations.
- 3.** Coordinate joint efforts with international religious leaders who are well known by the general public.
- 4.** Befriend the media. Get to know reporters, producers and editors, so that they are willing to take your calls and read your press releases.

Question

- *Participant: “Wouldn't you consider befriending the media a form of corruption?”*
- *Facilitator: “Reaching out to the media to get your message to the public is essential to advocacy. It does not presuppose ‘friendship’ but is a business relationship to accomplish your peacemaking objectives.”*

Ethical Issues in Media Advocacy

The media has the potential to produce social change, yet it can also cause great harm. Think of the news as a knife: in the hands of a surgeon, it can create life; in the hands of a murderer, it can kill. We may not have control over the media, but we do have control over what and how we present our stories.

Journalists face the difficult task of remaining neutral and objective – a task that can prove nearly impossible. The goal of a good journalist is to report what s/he sees and hears without judgment or assumption. Sometimes, the goal of a journalist is not to report at all. For example, if a journalist learns of a pending attack, what should s/he do? The published story will undoubtedly lead to chaos, so the reporter needs to decide whether to publish it, or quietly pass the information on to the authorities.

A note of caution: in the past, African leaders have been portrayed negatively by international journalists. Our role when gaining media attention is to ensure that journalists understand the story and the values in which we believe.

Exercise 3: How to Write Press Releases

Objective

To teach participants how to write a press release that will capture the media's attention.

Materials

Flip chart, markers, handouts on the elements of a good press release.

Directions

Ask participants to break into small groups, according to the country they represent. Ask each group to come up with an event that they could hold to attract media attention, such as a visit from high-ranking political or religious officials, a dedication ceremony of a building, an interfaith meeting of religious leaders, etc.

Explain that in order to get the media to attend the event, it is necessary to send out press releases that capture the

attention of editors and producers. Review the key points and review a sample press release. Then, ask participants to write their own press release, which they could use to attract the media to their event.

Key Points

The Purpose of a Press Release

A press release is used to invite the media to write a story about an event. The goal is to pique the interest of reporters, editors or producers, so they will attend. The press release should be short, to the point and interesting. When writing a press release, try to find an angle that makes the event unique. Remember that your reader may not make it past the title and the first paragraph, so all the important and exciting information needs to be upfront.

If, for example, you are having a meeting with interfaith religious leaders, it might not be of interest to the media if you titled your press release, “Meeting of religious leaders on July 31, 2003 in Sierra Leone.” Instead, try something like this: “Unprecedented Meeting of Muslim and Christian Leaders: Can They Help Bring Peace to Sierra Leone?” Don’t try to write a story in a press release; it’s only about getting the reporter to cover the event.

Elements of a Good Press Release

There are many things that a press release should not include, but it *is* necessary to have all the information the press needs to know about your event, your organization and how to reach you. Remember to include these things:

A. A contact person and number. At the top of your press release, you should always have the name of your organization, the date, the contact person’s first and last name and at least one phone number where they can reach you.

B. The title of the event. Make sure that you consider an interesting angle. If someone of stature will attend the event, include the person’s name in the title.

C. A first paragraph that includes where, when and what. Your first paragraph should include all the pertinent information, including the time of day that the event will take place. The rest of the press release may be incidental.

D. Two or three paragraphs describing the event in greater detail and any major players who will be involved. If you are having a meeting, give an overview of the agenda. If it’s a ceremony, describe how the events will proceed. Include inspiring quotes from the directors or honored guests.

E. A final paragraph that describes your organization, your mission statement and how the reader can find out more information about you. You can write something like this: “The IRC SL is a community-based religious group dedicated to.... To learn more about Religions for Peace and the IRC SL, find us on the Web at.... or call us at....”.

F. A photo is not necessary, but it’s always a good idea if you have one on hand. A picture can work especially well if you have something or someone you want to showcase, for example, a group of children, a new building, a famous leader, etc.

How to Use Your Press Release

It is rare for the media to cover a story with just one press release. Start sending the information to as many television, radio stations and newspapers as you can at least one week prior to the event. Plan on sending the same press release at least three times before you get a response, and don’t wait for them to call you. Get the name of a contact person and try to establish a relationship with him/her by following up your press release with phone calls. Make sure that you have one person on your staff assigned to meet and greet the media on the day of the event and have staff members on hand who can give them any information they need.

Exercise 4: Organizing a Press Conference

Objective

To teach participants the steps for organizing, planning and executing a successful press conference.

Materials

Flip chart, markers and handouts on points to remember during the event.

Directions

Briefly explain the purpose of a press conference and then ask participants several “what if” questions to help them identify problems that can occur before and during a press conference. Ask the following:

1. What if you organized a press conference, got confirmation from five or six news agencies, and on the day of the event only one person showed up?
2. What would you do if one of the reporters took an oppositional role during the conference and asked you questions that put you on the spot?

3. What if a reporter suggested that your organization and your efforts might make matters worse in the country?
4. What would you do if two reporters from politically opposed publications began to argue during the conference?
5. What would you do if a reporter asked you a question that you couldn't or didn't want to answer?

After discussing the answers, present the key points.

Key Points

How to Organize a Press Conference

First, you need to decide on a topic that will pique the interest of the media. Usually, there is a well-known person who is willing to speak to the press about a topic that is important to the general public. You can also use a press conference to present findings from a new study that may impact the population of the country. Assume that the press will need a very good reason to attend, so an event like a building dedication or a meeting will probably not work. In other words, press trainings are the not event. You can send a press release, but you should also be sure to send an invitation, including the name(s) of reporters you want to invite. Remember the golden rule: Be tenacious. Call them to make sure you get a response. Priorities change constantly in the media, so call them again a few days prior to the event to make sure they are coming.

Prior to the event you should make sure that you have; (1) an agenda with a time frame; (2) a list of possible questions the press might ask you and a clear and unified response to these questions; and (3) an appropriate venue with all the amenities you will need for the event. It is useful for one staff member to prepare a checklist for all the logistical and equipment needs.

Points to Remember During the Event

Remember that the goal of the event is to educate the public and promote the work of your organization, so be careful not to create an antagonistic relationship with the press. Your job is to create a comfortable environment and leave the press with a favorable opinion about you and your work. Expect them to challenge you, and don't show offense when they do. Here are a few more tips to keep in mind:

- Establish a warm environment by thanking the press for attending and by making sure each reporter is comfortable. You may want to assign one staff member to each reporter to assist them with anything they need.

- Ask reporters to sign an attendance sheet when they arrive, so that you can follow up with them after the event.
- Set rules and guidelines from the outset of the conference. For example, ask that people raise their hands when they have a question, etc.
- If a reporter asks you a personal question, try to answer him/her honestly to avoid assumptions.
- If you feel annoyed with a question, do your best not to show it. Instead, take a deep breath, then speak slowly and calmly. Make sure you watch your tone and facial expressions. Remember: you want the media on your side.
- When you end the event, make sure that you thank each reporter personally and politely ask them when they are planning to publish/produce a story.

Exercise 5: Giving a Powerful Interview

Objective

To give participants the tools they need to give the press a strong and positive interview.

Materials

Basket with index cards with questions on them (one for each participant) and handouts on: (1) qualities of a good interviewee; and (2) thinking on your feet in an interview.

Directions

Ask participants to find a partner, then pass around a basket with index cards and ask each participant to take one and read it to themselves without showing their partners. The questions written on the index cards should be provocative and difficult to answer. Try to think of questions that the media might ask at a conference or event. For example: "Don't you think that religious leaders should stay out of politics?" or "Many people say that religion and ethnicity are the cause of war today. What do you think?" Ask one person in each pair to start by playing reporter and asking the question written on their card to their partner. Then, switch.

Discuss in the large group how these questions made participants feel and how they felt about their ability to respond. Explain that the press often aims to catch you off guard in an interview. You may not know what questions to expect, but you can expect to be challenged and sometimes surprised. Review the key points and then try the exercise again by switching questions.

Key Points

Getting the Interview: How to Access the Media

The most obvious type of interview can be the hardest to

get. Rarely do reporters call an organization for an interview simply because they find it interesting. Advocacy takes a lot more work than that. Think creatively and try many different avenues, including:

- Radio call-in programs
- Op-ed pieces
- Photos with captions
- Pro bono advertising
- Collaborative efforts with other organizations to attract media attention to an issue. Remember there is power in numbers.
- Experts to serve on panels that will be televised
- Newspaper calendars of events

Qualities of a Good Interviewee

The media can put a negative or positive spin on anything you say, so remember not to talk too much. Often, when you're nervous, it's easy to become loquacious and verbose. Concentrate on giving two- or three-sentence answers, and pause for a moment before speaking to make sure that you say what you mean. Here are a few pointers:

- Think while you talk. Slow down your speech a little and try to monitor what you say. If you say something that you didn't intend, correct it before moving on to the next question.
- Maintain control over the interview while giving the reporter the feeling that s/he is in control. For example, you should make sure that you say what you want to get across in the interview, and then answer the question you are asked.
- Be consistent with your answers. Reporters may ask you the same question several times or in different ways. You can refer to the answer you have already given to show them that you recognize the repetition.

Thinking on Your Feet in an Interview

More than likely, a reporter will ask you a question that you can't or don't want to answer. If this happens, don't panic. Your goal is to stay calm and buy enough time to get an answer together. You can try a variety of techniques:

- Repeat the question to get clarity on what the reporter is asking and to buy a few moments.
- Ask for time by saying something like, "That's a good question. Can we go to the next question and come back to it? I'd like a minute to think about it." Then, let your colleague answer the next question while you are thinking.
- Ask for clarification by saying something like, "Can you

tell me a little bit more about what you are asking? I'm not sure I'm clear on the question." While they're talking, you're thinking.

- If you don't know the answer, just say so. "I have to be honest and say that I don't know the answer to that question. I will try to find out by the end of the conference." During a break, try to get the answer.
- Try a gentle method of redirecting the reporter's attention by saying, "Well, here's what I *can* tell you..."

Question

Participant: "Is persuasion of the media a form of corruption?"

Facilitator: "No, in order to engage the media, you must make yourself newsworthy."

Participants' Comments

Participant: "The governments of most of our countries manipulate the media, which eliminates the possibility of fair media coverage."

Facilitator: This is a challenge in many countries where governments are engaged in combat with rebel forces. In such cases, outreach at the grassroots may be a more effective strategy. There may still be possibilities for media: radio, rather than print, is one example. But they must be targeted carefully."





A n n e x e s

Regional Communiqués

Annex 1

West Africa Communiqué

Under the auspices of the *World Conference of Religions for Peace*, representatives of women and men of faith of the Inter-Religious Councils (IRC) of Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and the National Forum of Religious Confessions of Côte d'Ivoire came together in Freetown, Sierra Leone, from 27 to 31 July 2003 for a regional inter-religious women's "Training of Trainers" entitled, "Religion, Women and Conflict." Cognizant of the armed conflicts

in the sub-region and the role religious women have played side by side with men in the resolution of the conflicts, participants came to share their experiences, enhance their skills and form a strong network of women of faith in the sub-region.

The Deputy Minister of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs of Sierra Leone, Mumunatu Koroma, representing the Minister, welcomed the participants and opened the consultation on July 27th. The opening ceremony was hosted by the IRC-Sierra Leone and attended by all participants of the consultation, Executive Committee Members of the IRC-Sierra Leone, representatives of the Women's Forum of Sierra Leone, and representatives of *Religions for Peace's* International and West Africa offices.

The participants fully expressed gratitude to *Religions for Peace* for conducting and funding the program.

During the consultation, a series of "Training of Trainers" workshops were conducted, covering the topics of conflict transformation, media/advocacy and leadership.

The participants noted with grave concern the prevailing situation of the armed conflicts in the sub-region in particular the current escalation of violence in Liberia, and its consequences on women and children. All forms of violence towards women and children, who bear the brunt of these wars, are deplored.

The participants are seeking support from national and international agencies, governments and *Religions for Peace* towards the establishment of new women's groups and to strengthen existing ones within each inter-religious council in the sub-region. This empowerment will enhance women's activities in addressing current issues, such as violence against women and children, HIV/AIDS, refugees/Internally Displaced Persons, street and orphan children, girl/child education and children in conflict. All participants agreed upon their return to their respective countries to work actively towards the formation and development of IRC women's groups and to ensure that gender mainstreaming is integrated throughout the work of the councils.

Aware of the pivotal role religion plays in the building of peace and justice in our societies, we women and men of faith in the West Africa sub-region:

- Call to our governments for stiffer punishment, enforcement and expedition of laws to protect women and children against violence;
- Call to our governments for greater support towards empowerment of women in leadership positions;
- Call upon the governments to continue creating an enabling environment for the consolidation of peace and

to uphold the principles of democracy, good governance and human rights;

- Call on the African Union to manifest more interest in resolving the conflicts and supporting the rights of women and children;
- Call to our governments, United Nations and international agencies to ensure that refugee and internally displaced women and children are protected during times of crisis within the mandates of international treaties and conventions;
- Call for the establishment of rehabilitation centers for women and children during times of conflict and post-conflict to address their psycho-social trauma, health and education needs;
- Call upon the Liberian Government, LURD, MODEL and other stakeholders to abide by the ceasefire agreement signed in Accra on June 17, 2003;
- Call upon ECOWAS, International Contact Group of Liberia, United Nations, the United States Government and all of the international community to support the immediate deployment of an international peacekeeping force to Liberia and to provide urgent humanitarian assistance to the suffering people;
- Call upon governments and international agencies to ensure adequate inclusion of gender issues in all aspects of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's procedures and operations;
- Call upon all women in the sub-region to mobilize themselves to work alongside men in peace-building efforts;
- Call upon our religious leaders to support women of faith in leadership roles within religious communities and the development of women's groups.

To this end, we women and men of faith in the sub-region call upon ourselves to:

- Take active leadership roles at every level in building civil societies;
- Establish new and strengthen existing women's groups within our respective inter-religious councils;
- Work with the IRC leadership to ensure gender mainstreaming is incorporated into all programming and implementation;
- Continue to advocate and sensitize the population on issues pertaining to women and children;
- Conduct conflict and leadership training within our respective communities to pass on the skills and knowledge gained from this consultation;

- Continue building relationships and networks between women of faith in the sub-region;
- Facilitate communication among sister associations;
- Strengthen relationships between French- and English-speaking countries;
- Continue to pray for sustainable peace in the sub-region and the well-being of the population;

This communiqué is fully endorsed by all participants and signed on the 31st of July 2003, in Freetown, Sierra Leone:

Women of Faith representative of the Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone

Women of Faith representative of the Inter-Religious Council of Liberia

Women of Faith representative of the Inter-Religious Council of Guinea

Women of Faith representative of the Inter-Religious Council of Ghana

Women of Faith representative of the National Forum of Religious Confessions of Côte d'Ivoire

Annex 2

Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo Communiqué

Under the auspices of the *World Conference of Religions for Peace*, we, women of faith from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo have gathered in Sarajevo on October 2 to 4, 2003 on the occasion of a regional training on “Mobilizing for Peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH) and Kosovo”, to affirm the role of faith in the reconstruction and healing of our respective communities and to seek ways of inter-religious cooperation.

The participants fully expressed gratitude to the religious communities of BiH and Kosovo, to the people of BiH for hosting, and to *Religions for Peace* for convening, facilitating and supporting this consultation.

We recognize the centrality of our faith in overcoming some of the most intractable common challenges, such as the insecurity and vulnerability faced by each of our communities; the occasional abuse of religious symbolism by perpetrators of violence; and the lack of recognition of the important contributions of women of faith and consequent lack of resources.

We note with grave concern the continued suffering of people in the region due to ongoing ethnic tensions, security concerns and economic instability. We note our commitment to stand in solidarity and support symbolically and practically all religious leadership and communities and to work together in partnership with them. We confirm our commitment, personally and collectively, to non-violence and peaceful resolution of conflicts in our societies.

We further highlight our commitment to work across BiH and Kosovo and to expand our network to include women of faith from around the Balkans. Indeed, with this consultation we confirm the establishment of a *Religions for Peace*-supported Balkan-wide multi-religious network. To realize these commitments, we are prepared to work in partnership with *Religions for Peace* to actualize programs in the region.

To strengthen our commitments we call upon the religious leaders to recognize and support our work for peace, reconciliation and reconstruction. And we therefore call upon the following actors:

- The leadership of the Inter-Religious Councils of BiH and Kosovo to support inter-religious women’s groups and initiatives;
- The government of BiH to continue to endorse and support our unique input and efforts;
- Balkan civil society actors to partner with us to achieve common objectives of stability and security in the region;
- All international organizations and agencies, especially the United Nations, European Union, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and the Council of Europe to endorse our multi-religious initiatives for peace.

To this end, we women of faith in the region call upon ourselves to:

- Take active leadership roles at every level in building civil societies;
- Establish new and strengthen existing women’s groups within our respective inter-religious councils;
- Work with the IRC leadership to ensure gender mainstreaming is incorporated in all program implementation;
- Continue to advocate and sensitize the population on issues pertaining to religious women and children;
- Conduct conflict and leadership training within our respective communities to pass on the skills and knowledge gained from this consultation;
- Continue building relationships and networks between women of faith in the region;

- Facilitate communication among sister associations;
- Continue to pray for sustainable peace in the region and the well-being of the population.

This communiqué is fully endorsed by all participants and agreed upon on the 4th of October 2003, in Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Annex 3

Further Relevant Resources

Women, Religion and Conflict

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