



Arab West Report

**Working towards peace and reconciliation between
Muslims and Christians;**

Intercultural Tools for Conflict Resolution

**presented at the Anna Lindh Foundation Forum, Barcelona, March 4-7,
2010**

Context of our Peace Building Work:

- Increasing number of media reports about tensions between Muslims and Christians in Egypt.
- Conflicting interpretations of conflicts are often along religious lines which deepens divisions.
- Often claims follow conflicts that cannot be substantiated,
- Rumors, avoidance, denial and claims that the current state of Muslim-Christian relations is hopeless are different ways people respond to tensions
- Fear for the other and fear for change is often cultivated



Copts protesting in Downtown Cairo, for Naj^c Hammādī

Methodology

Approach – We follow Dr. Johan Galtung’s methodology

Diagnosis – Identify context, bad and good practices, research in depth Media Reporting and the Use of Reconciliation Sessions in Restoring Peace

Prognosis – Suggest Corrective Steps and Observations

Therapy - How to Address Conflict

- Identify local leaders and root causes of conflict
- Encourage interaction and dialogue among local leaders
- Make information available to parties concerned
- Consider supporting long term interaction through a project



Experts in dialogue meet

Diagnosis:

Identify Major Actors:

Government
Church
Media
Local Actors
Security Apparatus.

Media Reporting:

Faulty Journalistic Practices
Media Coverage of incidents
Expatriate Coptic Websites

Reconciliation Sessions in Restoring Peace

Study:

- Obstacles to Success
- Case Studies
- Diverse Opinions about Reconciliation
- The Legal Basis of Reconciliation



AWR interns meeting with Christian villagers of ʿIzbat Bushrá. To the right Johan Jansen of World Servants inquiring into our work.

Arab-West Report tool for diagnosis

- Providing a systematic survey of Arab press/ this press is a mix of opinions and facts
- Media critique – not only internal consistency, sources and language used but including accurate and context based investigative reporting,
- Interviews with all parties involved, interviews with analysts
- Analysis – student interns supervised by experts in subject they cover

Resulting in:

-Electronic library that aims to link reporting about conflicts to articles,(this could include history of a location, background of involved people, links to background reports, etc).



Speakers and moderator
at CAWU Journalism
conference.



Prognosis: Corrective Steps and Observations

▪The Role of the State

- equal application of the law for all citizens needed,
- greater transparency

▪The Role of Local Religious Leadership

- Influence of Local Priests and Imams needs to be used to create bridges
- Reasons for Necessary Christian Initiative (?? Don't understand)
- Practices Promoting Good Community Relations
- Removal of Leadership (removal??

Don't understand)

- Reconciliation along Religious Lines?

('need reformulation)

▪The Role of the Media

(see previous page under diagnosis)

▪Egyptian Non-governmental Organizations

often reach both Muslims and Christians and could play a greater role in conflict



NGO workshop.

AWR methods for the Prognosis: The corrective steps.

Government – extending the rule of law throughout the country, greater transparency needed as to why certain decisions were taken

Religious institutions – leadership of the religious communities being better prepared to address tensions

Local leaders – political, social, religious jurisdictions; care for the community

NGO community – can parlay social capital into conflict diffusion

Media – need for balanced and objective reporting

-Therefore we must:

- Addressing all responsible parties.
- Need to build an early warning system.
- Structure needed to address conflicts after they occur.

Therapy: How to Address Conflict

Before a conflict takes place:

- Improving Community Relations
- Training for Skills and Building a Network

During:

- Identification of Leaders who could play a role in conflict resolution
- Contextual Studies of the concerned conflict

After:

- Field Visits to Collect Data and Promote Dialogue
- Identifying one or more mediators
- Evaluating (of what??)
- Considering a Project to Promote Community Interaction



AWR team meeting with prominent Islamic thinker Jamāl al-Bannā and Dutch author on Islam, Eildert Mulder

Tools for therapy: How AWR Addresses Conflict.

- Channel facts and analysis back to Egyptian leaders/intellectuals
- Forming network of local bonds across religious lines
- Training student interns/journalists/NGOs writing and conflict resolution skills
- Provide student interns/journalists/NGOs access to database (adds depth and context to reporting)



Journalism workshop.

Our Main Successes:

- Compilation of an extensive media and reporting database
- Site Visits to Explore Root Causes and provide context for local tensions
- Hosting Workshops to train journalists and promote cooperation among NGO leaders, harnessing the resources of all to promote social peace
- Conducting interviews with prominent personalities with an eye toward encouraging active peacemaking

- 1) The AWR online database.
- 2) AWR meeting with Pope Shenouda III.



Main Findings of the ZIVIK Peace Building Project

- Media distortions and sensationalism increase societal tensions
- Current efforts at 'reconciliation' do not decrease tensions but rather tend to increase them
- Major institutions of society seem to be caught unaware by tensions, and without prior preparation lack a plan for handling it
- Integration of society in all its diverse aspects is the best remedy for social tensions
- Regions torn by tension often need outside encouragement to promote social reconciliation and reintegration of society

- 1) Interns checking the newspapers.
- 2) The fence at Abū Fānā separating them from their Arab neighbours.



What Still Need to be Done?

- Integrate the search functions of the database for easy access to background information
- Develop a network of area peace builders
- Conduct site visits to stimulate dialogue in areas of conflict
- Translations into Arabic



Site visit with Prof. Harald Suermann of Missio and Bonn University, Germany, April 2009.

What Help Do We Need?

- Volunteers/Interns to conduct research, help with office tasks.
- Examples of successful peacemaking efforts from around the world.
- Financial support to fund our projects.
- Technical assistance to make our database meet international library standards.
- Linking our electronic library to as many institutions worldwide as possible.



Our Interns at AWR.



Head of CIDT and chair of CAWU Eng. Sawsan Gabra with international coordinator Jayson Casper



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[ZIVIK Conflict Resolution](#)

The ZIVIK Peacemaking Project is a civil society conflict resolution project sponsored by the German Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations ([IFA](#)). ZIVIK is a German acronym for civil conflict resolution.

The project is an effort to encourage social relations which limit the escalation of conflict and which help repair communities once it occurs.

The project has collected data from several categories, which has produced the paper listed below. These are from a case study of Izbet Bushra, where Muslims and Christians became involved in conflict following a church building dispute. It also has produced two workshops, seeking to instill these values in the Egyptian media and NGO community. Through the lens of these values the project has studied and commented on the recent conflict in Nag Hamadi, in which six Christians were killed exiting church on Coptic Christmas Eve.



The project is currently studying avenues to participate in area reconciliation. Reconciliation also merits a special section of this project, for which several reports have been collected. Finally, interviews with prominent Egyptians on related topics have informed the direction of the project. The reader is welcomed to this site and encouraged to benefit from the research presented.

For ZIVIK website go to www.enawu.org/ and click on the ZIVIK- Project Link