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Coordinates for Transformative Reconciliation

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RECONCILIATION

ABOUT THE REPORT

Commissioned by the United States Institute of Peace's Inclusive Peace Processes and Reconciliation program, this report presents a tentative framework for planning and implementing reconciliation initiatives. The framework was formulated based on qualitative interviews with experts with long-standing, firsthand experience in 20 reconciliation processes globally. The findings were corroborated with reference to existing literature within the peacebuilding field.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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Summary

This report uses the metaphor of coordinates to examine "transformative reconciliation" processes—that is, processes that sustainably transform negative relationships shaped by conflict. Rather than present idealized notions of what reconciliation "should be," the report develops pointers toward what concrete reconciliation processes look like when they succeed in transforming conflict-affected relationships at different, interconnected levels of society. These coordinates highlight qualities of reconciliation processes that are useful for guiding process development and sustained adaptation to address changing needs on the ground. The coordinates emerged from qualitative interviews with experts from 20 prominent reconciliation processes globally and comprise qualities of process, qualities of leadership, and signs of progress. Together, they form a basic framework that can be used strategically to develop effective reconciliation support. Importantly, the framework is not presented as definitive or exhaustive; rather, it assumes the dynamic nature of reconciliation processes that are at once imperfect, burdened with challenges, and reflective of varying degrees of success.

Despite obvious differences in context, the cases examined displayed similar qualities of process and leadership and similar signs of progress. Where and when these crosscutting qualities emerged, a more sustainable, inclusive, and impactful reconciliation became possible. For example, in processes that led to sustainable transformation of hostile and oppressive relationships, leaders were keenly aware of, spoke about, and sought to address relational harm inflicted upon individuals, communities, and society at large. Across the cases, effective leaders knew how to build sufficient trust to bring together adversaries and excluded groups, forge mutually agreeable pathways toward nonviolence, and develop strategies for the empowerment of all stakeholder groups.

Transformative reconciliation, it appears, also allows for a variety of complementary processes to occur concurrently at multiple levels of society and throughout different phases of conflict. Such processes require sustained reflection and engagement in order to constantly adapt practice and reshape goals as processes develop and demand change. Moreover, given that reconciliation processes often emerge organically, even in the heart of conflict, external actors need to seek out and support initiatives that are already present on the ground rather than simply attempting to start new initiatives. The findings presented here offer

precisely the kind of guidance needed to distinguish between promising and less promising on-the-ground opportunities for transformative reconciliation.

Ultimately, these findings and recommendations can help governments, multilateral organizations, and nongovernmental actors to overcome existing disconnections between policies, funding, practice, and beneficiaries and to develop more responsive and responsible reconciliation initiatives.

Cambodians line up to observe the trial of a former Khmer Rouge leader accused of war crimes by a UN-backed tribunal in Phnom Penh on November 23, 2011. The tribunal was formed to hold accountable some of the perpetrators of atrocities committed by the Khmer Rouge regime from 1975 to 1979. (Photo by Heng Sinith/AP)

Introduction

Many observers agree that reconciliation—generally understood as the sustainable transformation of relationships damaged or obstructed by violent conflict—is of critical importance to foster the kind of change that leads beyond formal negotiations, agreements, and institutional reform measures and toward sustainable peace. This understanding of reconciliation endows it with both moral appeal and strategic value and ensures that it remains a priority in peacebuilding efforts globally.[1]

At the same time, reconciliation's conceptual complexity—and the many different approaches this has spawned—remains a major challenge to the development of policy frameworks with relevant goals, effective support modalities, and accurate indicators of progress.[2] For example, some scholars and practitioners approach reconciliation from the premise that it requires in-depth individual change and the forgiveness of once-hated enemies.[3] Others view the main objective of reconciliation as securing the legal accountability of perpetrators and restoring the rule of law.[4] Another approach focuses on the pursuit of structural change and social justice as a way to reform power and better allocate resources.[5] Then there are those for whom reconciliation is achieved chiefly through the willingness of conflicting parties to engage in vigorous debate and to allow for difference—a form of nonviolent conflict management that may lead to peace agreements or constitutional frameworks.[6]

Beyond these different approaches to reconciliation, contextual specificities ensure that no single blueprint

or model can guarantee reconciliation's success.[7] Context-specific factors also make reconciliation notoriously difficult to track and assess in the face of the avalanche of urgent, immediate needs of those directly affected by the conflict; indeed, the long-term patience that reconciliation can demand can appear counterintuitive or even irresponsible.

Making matters even more complex, reconciliation initiatives also feature an astonishing array of activities, including such vastly different processes as formal political negotiations, judicial proceedings, socioeconomic development, psychosocial support, trauma healing, community dialogue, memorialization, and education, to name a few examples.[8] The actors who lead, fund, facilitate, and otherwise enable and orchestrate reconciliation processes are no less diverse, ranging from local leaders who may represent one or more sides of the conflict to mediators, facilitators, and activists from within the conflict to international actors, diplomats, programming specialists, and so on.[9]

Considering these and other challenges that reconciliation actors face, this report suggests that the fields of research, policy, funding, and practice can offer complementary contributions toward what is here termed "transformative reconciliation"—that is, the sustainable transformation of negative relationships shaped by conflict. Within this context, the report uses the metaphor of coordinates to examine what sets transformative reconciliation processes apart from those with little or negligible impact. These coordinates highlight qualities of reconciliation processes that can be useful for guiding processes through the many challenges they face as they address changing needs on the ground as effectively as possible. Together, the coordinates form a basic framework to guide efforts toward transformative reconciliation. This framework is not presented as definitive or exhaustive. Rather, it assumes the dynamic nature of reconciliation processes that are at once imperfect, burdened with challenges, and demonstrate varying degrees of success.

This report is based on a qualitative study that investigated 20 different reconciliation processes, as listed in box 1, implemented in 20 different countries.[10] The study drew primarily on semi-structured interviews, which were conducted virtually in 2020 and 2021 with experts or key leaders who had been instrumental in these processes.[11] The 20 individuals selected for interviews all have firsthand experience with the reconciliation processes they discussed, as well as in-depth knowledge of reconciliation in general. Sixteen of the interviewees are originally from, and are still based in, the country where they undertook their reconciliation work. The other four are widely recognized as having substantial experience with the processes they discussed. The interviewees included leading scholars and practitioners whose work focuses on reconciliation, former and current officials of national governments and the United Nations, representatives of civil society organizations, and representatives of national nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and international NGOs.

The next section presents a brief discussion of how the metaphor of coordinates functions in the context of this study. The report then looks in turn at each of the coordinates—which comprise qualities of process, qualities of leadership, and signs of progress—that emerged from the interviews. The report concludes with recommendations for actors seeking to support reconciliation that has a lasting impact on conflict-affected relationships.

The findings and insights presented in this report reflect the analysis of the authors, which was derived from the observations made by the interviewees. The report is also informed by published literature on reconciliation, including peer-reviewed articles and discussion papers, books, and organizational reports from think tanks and human rights agencies, as well as NGOs and INGOs specializing in the peace and conflict field.

Box 1.

THE 20 RECONCILIATION PROCESSES CONSIDERED

Africa

Women's groups in **Kenya** that promoted trauma healing, ethnic reintegration, and ethnic coexistence in the wake of political violence from 1963 to 2008 and the shortcomings of the subsequent Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission.

Grassroots initiatives in **Sierra Leone** that began in 2007 incorporating Fambul Tok traditional communal practices to support restoration and healing in communities following the 1991–2002 civil war and the 2002 Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

National political negotiations in **South Africa** that followed a civic-driven National Peace Accord in 1991 and resulted in a constitutional democracy, some limited measure of material redress, and the establishment of the country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 1995.

Negotiated settlement to address group tensions over natural resources and political control in **Sudan/South Sudan** following a second major civil war from 1983 to 2005.

Local conflict resolution and peacemaking processes in the Sanaag region of **Somalia** that began in 2012 following the conclusion of the National Reconciliation Conference in 2007 and the Djibouti peace process of 2008–9.

Interventions by women insider mediators in **Uganda** that helped to advance negotiations with the Lord's Resistance Army in 2004 and 2005.

Grassroots initiatives led by women in **Burundi** that fostered improved relationships between Hutu and Tutsi ethnic communities during the country's 1993–2005 civil war.

Americas

Locally led and internationally informed reconciliation processes in **Colombia** that have promoted institutional policy changes, justice, and comprehensive peace during successive government administrations since the mid-2000s.

Transitional justice mechanisms implemented in **Peru** after 2000 following decades of mass human rights violations and President Alberto Fujimori's authoritarian rule from 1990 to 2000.

Reconciliation initiatives since 2009 in the **United States** aimed at improving relationships and increasing trust between marginalized communities and law enforcement institutions in urban neighborhoods.

Box 1. (continued)

Asia and Oceana

Civic and political initiatives in **Australia** to encourage a formal acknowledgment and a national apology from the federal government to the "Stolen Generations" of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

A national tribunal and community-level initiatives in **Cambodia** to symbolize national unity and to hold accountable some of the perpetrators of the atrocities and other violence of Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge regime that governed from 1975 to 1979.

Intercommunal activities and dialogues facilitated from 2018 onward in Rakhine State in **Myanmar** to build trust and encourage coexistence between Rohingya, Rakhine, and other ethnic and religious groups in the context of genocide, an ongoing civil war, and a military coup.

Locally driven communal dialogue processes in **Nepal** to manage natural resource conflicts among various groups impacted by the Maoist struggle against the government from 1996 to 2006.

Ethnic exchange and oral history initiatives in **Sri Lanka** to foster recognition and memorialization of women's war stories and ethnic coexistence among conflicting groups following the 1983–2009 civil war.

International intervention in **Timor-Leste** led by the United Nations that involved national, regional, and communal initiatives that began in 2001 following violent conflict in 1999 involving Timor-Leste and Indonesia.

Europe

A preparatory process launched in 2017 in **Finland** by the prime minister's office to prepare for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Concerning the Sámi People. Initiatives were based on truth-telling, indigenous ownership, and trauma-healing support processes to establish and reform relations between the state, the Sámi people, and other communities.

Public acknowledgment of the responsibility of the German state associated with being captured by the Nazi regime and the violence that followed, by German president Joachim Gauck in 2013 and the art of memorialization and healing through grassroots-driven theater to improve **Franco-German** relations decades after World War II.

National political reconciliation and civic processes in **Northern Ireland** to foster a peaceful future and to develop ways of dealing with the past in the wake of the Good Friday Peace Agreement of 1998.

Middle East

Postconflict stabilization and ethnic reintegration on the Nineveh Plains of **Iraq** through civic and religious dialogue at the state level during 2017 and 2018.
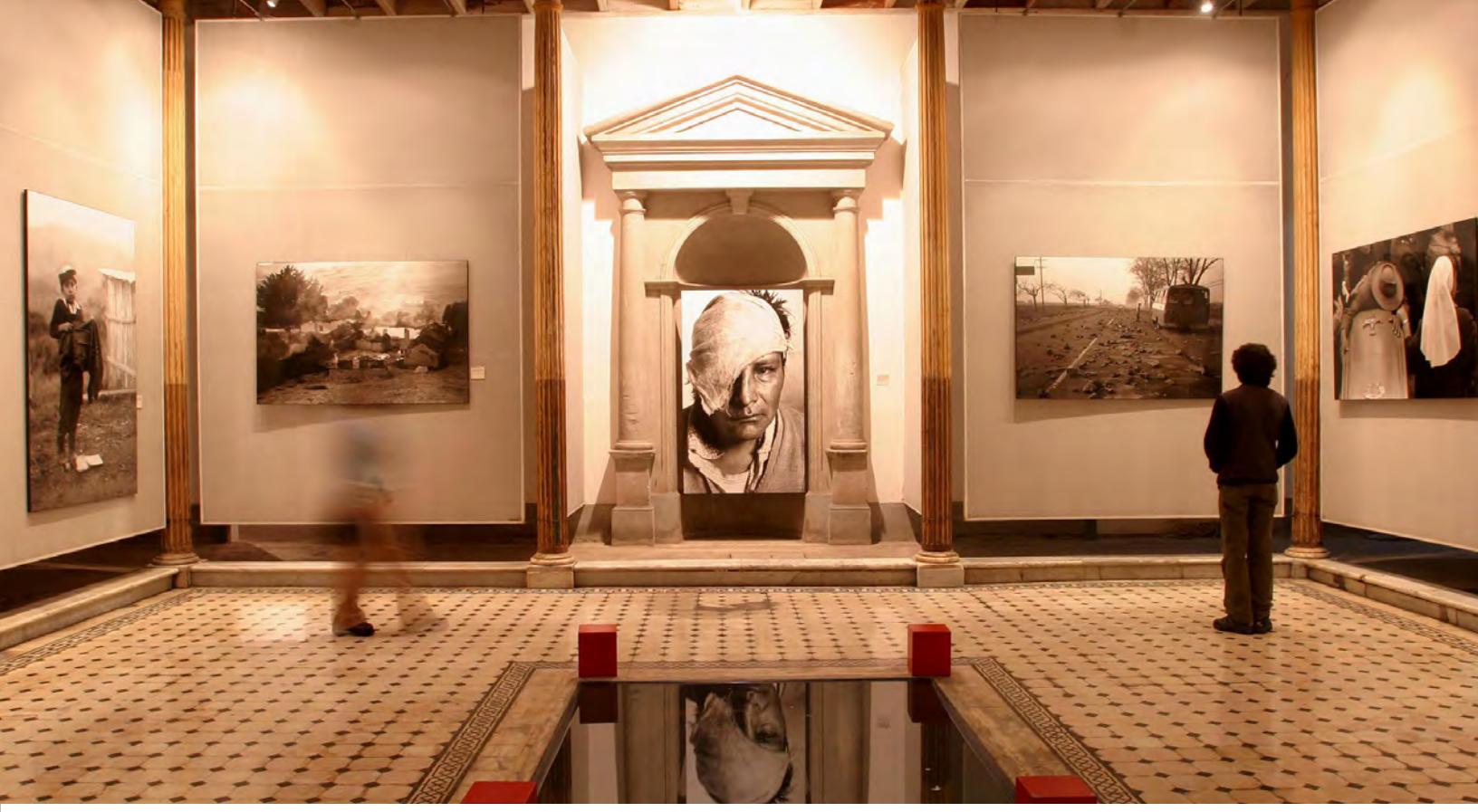
A photography exhibit commissioned by Peru's Truth Commission is on display on May 21, 2004, in Lima. The exhibit—called Yuyanapaq, which means "to remember" in the Indigenous language Quechua—is intended to serve as a collective memory of Peru's internal conflict. (Photo by Ana Cecilia Gonzales-Vigil/New York Times)

Coordinates, Qualities, and Signs

Coordinates are typically points of intersection on a grid system that covers a map of a particular area. By combining two sets of information—for example, longitude and latitude measurements—a location can be described as the point of intersection between the two. Although coordinates cannot offer descriptions of the terrain of an area as a whole, they are extremely useful for pinpointing specific locations. The metaphor of coordinates is used in this study to emphasize pointers toward transformative reconciliation and its ongoing development as it moves through uncertain terrain. Specifically, analysis of the interviews revealed three prominent coordinates—qualities of *process,* qualities of *leadership*, and signs of *progress*—that were present across the cases where reconciliation led to some degree of meaningful and sustained change in relationships.

As with coordinates on a map, it is necessary to focus on specific qualities or signs of progress in order to improve conflict-affected relationships. The idea is that transformative reconciliation becomes more possible where effective qualities of process, qualities of leadership, and signs of progress as described below intersect. As such, progress can be expected where the qualities and signs listed in box 2 begin to appear together in combination—although the nature of any combination is always highly context-dependent.

No single reconciliation process examined exhibited all three coordinates and all qualities and signs at any given time. Nor were any coordinates, qualities, or signs of progress seen as consistently more valuable than others across different processes. Consequently,

Box 2.
COORDINATES FOR TRANSFORMATIVE RECONCILIATION

Process Qualities

— Multiple processes that function concurrently and require sustained adaptation

— Processes involve complementary engagements of dialogue, reflection, and collaborative action

— Processes benefit from strategic partnerships between local initiatives and international support

Leadership Qualities

— Leaders understand and respond to context

— Leaders acknowledge and challenge legacies of violence at individual and societal levels

— Leaders promote inclusion and empowerment

Signs of Progress

— Acknowledgment of the need for a common future

— Concrete measures to mitigate and repair past and ongoing harm and to prevent future harm

— Improved levels of trust between stakeholders

— Meaningful inclusion of marginalized and minority groups

the coordinates and corresponding qualities and signs are presented in a nonhierarchical format in box 2. They should be treated not as a checklist or a set of instructions, but as dynamic points of reference that can provide guidance on how to support transformative reconciliation more effectively through policies and related programming.

The next three sections of this report look in turn at the coordinates of process, leadership, and progress. And within each section, the associated qualities

and signs are illustrated with examples drawn from the 20 reconciliation processes studied. It should be noted that all of the 20 processes featured challenges and shortcomings, and none, therefore, can be said to represent best practices or to showcase an approach to reconciliation that is universally applicable. Nonetheless, the examples offer concrete illustrations of how each of the qualities and signs can enhance the transformative potential of a reconciliation process. Each of the following three sections concludes with a summary discussion of findings.

Process Qualities

Process emerged as a prominent consideration for reaching transformative reconciliation. Interviewees across the board did not speak about or describe reconciliation as an event or a desired end-state, but rather as a series of initiatives, whether sequential or not, that informed, built upon, and enabled one another, and by doing so, provided society with a sense of movement away from violent conflict and toward peaceful ways of engagement. From the interviews, three process-related qualities stand out. These are illustrated with four examples from reconciliation processes in Australia, Timor-Leste, Kenya, and Colombia.

MULTIPLE PROCESSES THAT FUNCTION CONCURRENTLY AND REQUIRE SUSTAINED ADAPTATION

Civic and official apologies to the "Stolen Generations" in Australia. Discriminatory and racialized laws, policies, and practices in Australia from the early to mid-1900s allowed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to be forcibly removed from their parents, families, and communities and relocated into government institutions such as "Children's Training Homes." Collectively, these children became known as the "Stolen Generations." In 1995, the Australian government launched an inquiry into this policy and its repercussions.[12] In April 1997, the federal government published a report titled "Bringing Them Home," and although a public debate erupted over the validity of some of its findings, the report's call for government acknowledgment of the harm caused and for an apology to the Stolen Generations was mostly heeded.[13] By 2001, all state and territorial governments in Australia had issued formal apologies. However, the federal government declined to follow suit. This refusal led to the development of grassroots initiatives that became known as the "Sorry Campaign,"

which demanded a federal apology and eventually shaped a "People's Apology."[14]

To build national awareness and support for a federal apology, the National Sorry Day Committee organized numerous events. These collective and concurrent efforts occurred over many years and took different forms, such as a National Sorry Day that began on May 26, 1998; a National Museum Defining Moments initiative; and the May 2000 Walk for Reconciliation across the Sydney Harbour Bridge.[15] These grassroots efforts helped to build and sustain awareness of reconciliation issues among the public and kept the pressure on the federal government.

In 2008, under Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's leadership, the apology was the first item addressed at the opening of parliament. The federal government finally agreed to offer a formal "National Apology" on February 13, 2008. The speech, delivered by the prime minister, was witnessed by thousands of Australians gathered for the event in Canberra and was broadcast nationwide. Although the government's federal apology was seen as an important symbolic act, numerous challenges remain for indigenous reconciliation efforts in Australia.

Multilevel, coordinated processes in the aftermath of violence in Timor-Leste. On August 30, 1999, the people of Timor-Leste voted overwhelmingly to form an independent nation after 24 years of occupation by Indonesian forces.[16] A UN-mandated force was formed about two weeks later to stop the violence that erupted in the wake of the referendum. Multiple reconciliation processes followed, some locally led, others internationally orchestrated, and together these

initiatives demonstrated that effective reconciliation requires many processes that develop over time, take various approaches, and occur at all levels of society.

Mass violence first erupted during and after Indonesia's original invasion of Portuguese Timor in 1975. The population was subjected to "widespread displacement, sexual violence, torture and other abuses," and more than 100,000 people lost their lives.[17] In 2001, the United Nations established the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation (CAVR) with a mandate to address past violence in the period from 1974 to 1999. The CAVR operated across all levels of society throughout Timor-Leste. It collected statements, conducted research, led "community reconciliation hearings" for low-level perpetrators, and facilitated community reintegration, memorialization, and victim support programs.[18] In October 2005, the CAVR submitted its final report, *Chega!* (*Enough!*), to President Xanana Gusmao.[19] Two months later, the Post-CAVR Technical Secretariat was established by Timor-Leste's government with a more limited mandate that included the dissemination of *Chega!* to educate the public and to push for reform based on the report's recommendations.[20] In addition to the CAVR, the UN-backed intervention also established a Serious Crimes Process in Timor-Leste to investigate and prosecute war crimes, cases of genocide, and crimes against humanity. Hailed as a success by the United Nations but heavily criticized by various human rights groups, the Serious Crimes Process had managed by 2011 to convict only 86 perpetrators of crimes associated with the past violence.[21]

In 2004, the governments of Timor-Leste and Indonesia agreed to establish a bilateral Commission for Truth and Friendship. The commission's July 2008 report found that Indonesian forces bore the greatest responsibility for crimes against humanity committed in the run-up to and following the 1999 referendum.[22] However, with Indonesia shunning the UN-led transitional justice process, the Indonesian military and political figures "most responsible" for crimes against humanity were not held accountable. This presented a major challenge to the process.[23] In December 2016, the Timorese government established the Chega! National Centre with a mandate that included education, memorialization, external relations, dissemination of the CAVR report, and survivor solidarity to continue to push for reform based on the report's recommendations.[24] Despite ongoing challenges, Timor-Leste's reconciliation process was successful in providing some sense of reconciliation in the country, especially where international, national, and local initiatives could combine to ensure a multilevel, comprehensive approach. For instance, instead of following in the footsteps of other reconciliation initiatives in the early 2000s, which centered mostly on high-profile, formal hearings and engagements, the CAVR appointed regional commissioners who worked through community-based processes that developed multiple, context-specific approaches that led to various sustainable outcomes. According to a 2014 Brookings Institution report: "The use of traditional structures and customary practice played a large role in successfully creating the conditions for IDPs [internally displaced persons] to return in safety and security to their communities." However, the report continued, "The weakness of these processes is that they were compartmentalized and limited to IDP situations rather than being applied holistically to a wide range of root causes, which continue to remain unaddressed."[25]

PROCESSES INVOLVE COMPLEMENTARY ENGAGEMENTS OF DIALOGUE, REFLECTION, AND COLLABORATIVE ACTION

Fostering dialogue, ethnic coexistence, and trauma healing in Kenya. Kenya's post-election violence in 2007 spurred a process of dialogue led by former UN secretary-general Kofi Annan and inspired the establishment in 2008 by the Kenyan parliament of the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC) to investigate and recommend appropriate actions on human rights abuses, including post-election and politically motivated violence, corruption, and displacements committed between December 1963 and

Relatives of victims of extrajudicial executions in 2008 in Soacha, Colombia, hold photos of loved ones during a May 10, 2022, reconciliation event with the commanders of the soldiers who did the killing. The victims were falsely accused of being anti-government guerrillas. (Photo by Fernando Vergara/AP)

February 2008.[26] However, the TJRC became mired in controversy when it became known that some of its leaders, including its chairperson, were among the very leaders implicated in acts of political violence in the commission's report. To date, as with several other truth and reconciliation commissions, many of the TJRC's recommendations have been largely or entirely ignored by those in power. This disappointing record inspired some of those involved in the TJRC to adopt an alternative approach: working as civic leaders directly with communities that had suffered from violence and human rights abuse.[27]

One set of initiatives focused on trauma healing, coexistence between marginalized ethnic groups, and community restoration. These initiatives were developed and led by a Kenyan woman and included widowed women's dialogue sessions and reflection groups for those who had lost their partners to the violence. The

women's groups, which met on a regular basis, brought together women of different ethnic identities to share their stories of the post-election violence and subsequent bouts of communal violence and its devastating impacts and to reflect together on their hurt and ongoing challenges in their daily lives. Some of these women's husbands had fought and even killed one another. These initiatives proved effective in that they were not only able to provide some measure of trauma awareness, resilience, and psychosocial support where the TJRC had failed, but through collaborative action, they also encouraged ethnic reintegration and coexistence in communities. Crucial to these processes were sustained, safe, and context-sensitive dialogue spaces that addressed specific issues that participants had experienced or were still experiencing and which they wanted support to address. These ongoing reflective dialogue sessions were instrumental in slowly rebuilding trust among community members.

> Reconciliation processes are not located exclusively in "post-settlement," "post-violence," or "post-conflict" periods. . . . There are points of entry for reconciliation throughout the life of a particular conflict or set of conflicts.

PROCESSES BENEFIT FROM STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN LOCAL INITIATIVES AND INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT

Colombia's comprehensive approach to reconciliation. Following the 2016 Havana peace agreement between the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), and the election of President Petro Gustavo in 2022, Colombia now has an array of institutions working together for reconciliation, including a Special Court for Peace, a Truth Commission, a Missing Person's Unit, and a Land Restitution Program, as well as a dedicated Victims Unit. On paper at least, this comprehensive approach seems to provide a good balance between the pursuit of reconciliation and the demands of justice.[28] This impressive process—which seeks to bring a decisive end to the long-standing, multiple conflicts among government entities, paramilitary and guerilla groups, organized crime, and drug cartels—has been decades in the making. In July 2005, under then president Álvaro Uribe, the controversial Peace and Justice Law demobilized paramilitary armed groups with indemnification, amnesty, and reparations. The law was expanded under President Juan Manuel Santos and offered broader reparations as part of the government's 2012–16 Havana negotiations with the FARC. The Santos government also passed, in 2011, the Victims and Land Restitution Law, which was intended to support ongoing reparations and reconciliation efforts.

Since 2016, Colombia's process has included features that not only address local concerns but also meet international legal standards (specifically on amnesty) while remaining authentically Colombian-led. It appears that by working together over a long period of time, often in the face of serious disagreements, Colombians have been able to develop a shared notion of transformative reconciliation that includes a common approach to key justice questions, such as amnesty and reparations. To this end, international input and expertise proved invaluable. Colombia's process seems to be succeeding where many other reconciliation processes have failed: namely, it is retaining a sense of local ownership while making the most of comparative international analysis and support.

TRANSFORMATIVE PROCESSES: KEY QUALITIES

Taken together, these examples suggest that progress is seldom achieved through dramatic singular events, such as one-off programmatic or political interventions. Instead, transformative reconciliation consists of multiple open-ended and start-stop processes occurring concurrently at different levels of society in both coordinated and uncoordinated ways over long periods (sometimes decades or even longer). They are based on in-depth knowledge of, and historical insights into, a given context, which make clear the complex realities facing those who seek to restore or build new relationships. The interviews conducted for this study also highlighted the fact that reconciliation processes are not located exclusively in "post-settlement," "post-violence," or "postconflict" periods. Indeed, violence may start, stop, restart, escalate, or de-escalate as conflicts continually ebb and flow. There are points of entry for reconciliation throughout the life of a particular conflict or set of conflicts.

Precisely because they typically demand fundamental shifts in prevailing power relations shaped by decades of hostilities and injustice, these processes are also fraught with setbacks and challenges. And yet, reconciliation efforts are often expected to deliver fundamental changes in a matter of one or two project cycles or

within a few years. Such unrealistic expectations carry the risk of profound disappointment. At the same time, stalled or unsuccessful processes do not signal an end but offer opportunities for new initiatives with the potential to overcome the weaknesses of their predecessors. These restarts and moments of reinvention often occur at the grassroots level, as, for example, in the cases examined in this study in Australia, Burundi, Kenya, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Cambodia. Another compelling example of dialogue, feedback loops, and incremental action comes from a collaborative project in the United States aimed at improving relationships and increasing trust between marginalized communities and law enforcement institutions in urban neighborhoods.[29] The National Network for Safe Communities has led to improvements in relationships and has gradually built trust, in part because of its sustained commitment to reconciliation through various processes, including ongoing listening and feedback sessions with communities.

Shifting away from rigid, project-oriented thinking toward a more flexible approach is required to accommodate the multiple, complementary, and concurrent feedback loops between practice, reflection, and concrete implementation. Linked together through creative

leadership, a succession of rebooted processes has the potential to foster transformative reconciliation.

Interviewees considered strategic partnerships and external (and international) support valuable when they helped to facilitate engagements, coax reluctant (sometimes outside) stakeholders into action, or provided necessary resources, such as financial, human, or training resources needed to support, develop, implement, or expand processes and initiatives. This study also found that dialogue as a specific form of engagement occupies a principal place in most reconciliation processes. Dialogue that fosters reconciliation does not end with talking—and in some situations, it also does not even begin with talking. Instead, it can involve symbolic actions, rituals, and reflection that eventually lead to desired outcomes (such as in the Cambodia process). It involves engagements where direct communication between hostile groups is initially regarded as almost impossible but then gradually becomes possible. Such open lines of communication necessitate careful preparation (as in the processes in Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Sierra Leone), respectful engagement, empathetic listening, and sustained and patient responses.

People visit a statue of former South African President Nelson Mandela in Pretoria on December 16, 2013, the Day of Reconciliation public holiday that commemorates the end of apartheid. The statue was unveiled earlier that day, one day after Mandela's funeral. (Photo by Daniel Berehulak/ New York Times)

Leadership Qualities

Effective leadership is a crucial coordinate in the pursuit of transformative reconciliation. Rather than undertaking psychosocial analysis of specific character traits of individual leaders (which is beyond the scope of this report), this section highlights three qualities of reconciliatory leaders considered vital by interviewees. These qualities are illustrated in three examples: Cambodia, South Africa, and Sierra Leone.

LEADERS UNDERSTAND AND RESPOND TO CONTEXT

Rebuilding Cambodian communities after genocide. Pol Pot's devastating Khmer Rouge regime governed Cambodia from 1975 to 1979. In 2006, a formal tribunal was established in concert with the United Nations to prosecute senior leaders of the Khmer Rouge. The tribunal's proceedings were initially televised, and people came together in homes and communities to witness the process and its narrative constructions of the past violence. The tribunal formally ended in 2022, at a cost of over $300 million, but resulting in the conviction of only three individuals.[30] Over time, Cambodians lost interest in the process.[31] The court proceedings appeared neither particularly meaningful nor relevant to people's daily lives and current concerns. Despite these shortcomings, the tribunal was not viewed as a total failure. It offered the Cambodian public a historic first opportunity to counter public denial of past crimes, and it did manage, even

if mostly for symbolic reasons, to hold accountable a few of those "most responsible" for the genocidal abuses committed during Pol Pot's reign.[32]

Significantly, separate from the formal tribunal process, informal grassroots efforts emerged that had concrete transformative impact. A telling example took place in a village where the family of a Khmer Rouge officer remained segregated from the rest of the village many years after the violence ended because he had sent an innocent boy to a brutal labor camp during the regime's rule. The officer had intended to kill the boy for allegedly throwing sand into his daughter's eyes while the children were playing. But other villagers intervened and were able to persuade the officer to spare the boy's life. Instead, the boy was banished from the community and sent to a hard labor camp.

Despite the trauma and suffering that followed, the boy survived the labor camp and was able to pursue a new life and begin a professional career. As an adult, he returned to his ancestral village, where he encountered a community frozen in past conflict and economic hardship. Notably, the family of the officer who had banished him were now outcasts themselves, socially isolated and shunned by the rest of the community. Now an empowered professional, the young man decided to help his childhood village by starting a community development initiative to address livelihood issues and restore the social fabric of the village. He then invited the banished family of the former Khmer Rouge officer to be the project's first beneficiary. This gesture—which was both concrete and deeply symbolic—had a profound impact on the community and eventually transformed decades-old hostilities into collaborative, productive relationships.[33]

This process illustrates how understanding and responding to context can lead to meaningful transformation of relationships at local level, even when the root causes of local conflicts extend far beyond the borders of a village. Such leadership requires not only deep insight into and understanding of context, power dynamics, and

histories, but also the determination to overcome the past for a better future.

LEADERS ACKNOWLEDGE AND CHALLENGE LEGACIES OF VIOLENCE AT INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETAL LEVELS

Nelson Mandela's self-aware leadership in post-apartheid South Africa. Nelson Mandela's autobiography, *Long Walk to Freedom*, reveals a deep self-awareness of the personal impact of apartheid violence on South Africa's first president to be elected under universal suffrage.[34] Despite his achievements and international recognition, Mandela was acutely aware that the mental wounds inflicted by apartheid would need ongoing healing. As his closest colleagues remember and as his autobiography indicates, it was precisely this self-awareness that was at the heart of his peacebuilding agenda, undergirding his impressive ability to bring together adversaries and supporters around a common purpose. According to these colleagues, it was as a direct result of his own experiences under apartheid that he was able to reach out so effectively to South Africans from different backgrounds.[35] Just weeks before the first democratic elections in South Africa in April 1994, former general Constand Viljoen, the self-proclaimed leader of the hard-line, militant right who had vowed to protect white privilege, formed a new pro-election movement and entered the political process. Viljoen explained later that he credited Mandela with changing his mind and that the personal trust developed between the two former military men convinced him he had made the right choice. Their relationship, developed over the course of many personal meetings, including in Mandela's home, helped to spare South Africa from a potentially devastating civil war.[36]

Mandela understood the psychology of fear that drove the Afrikaners and found ways to assuage it through conversations and relationships with potential adversaries such as General Viljoen. He responded with equal sagacity to the anger and frustration within the Black

community.[37] On several occasions when the apartheid state had brutally killed Black activists and the country was about to spiral into all-out war, Mandela argued that a war would serve no one's interest, but that injustice should galvanize resolve to overcome the past. His efforts helped to disrupt, discredit, and eventually displace some, if not all, of the violent legacies of apartheid. In place of apartheid and its racist ideological framework, Mandela offered reconciliation as not only a context-appropriate, realistic agenda for social and political change, but also a thoroughly visionary agenda that, as he said himself, was born in deep self-reflection during his 27-year incarceration. Not every leader can or is required to mirror Mandela's approach, but leaders seeking to foster transformative reconciliation must consider that challenging legacies of violence at the personal level remains a core element of such a process.

LEADERS PROMOTE INCLUSION AND EMPOWERMENT

Transforming communities through local, empowered, and inclusive leadership in Sierra Leone. Sierra Leone's civil war lasted from 1991 until 2002. In its aftermath, the government and the international community established a hybrid Special Court for Sierra Leone to prosecute those most responsible for committing serious violations of human rights and a Truth and Reconciliation Commission that began reparative work in 2002.[38] By 2008, however, the commission's recommendations remained unaddressed, and the court, like the tribunal in Cambodia, had largely lost the interest of the public. With the official avenue to reconciliation thus seeming to lead nowhere, creative civic leaders initiated local efforts that developed into what became known as the Fambul Tok process, which instrumentalized cultural and symbolic resources, such as storytelling, apologies, and ritualistic ceremonies around bonfires, to bring communities together to tackle their past and agree on a way forward.

In areas that had borne the brunt of the violence during the war, community leaders began facilitating conversations about the past, providing trauma-healing support, conducting ritual healing sessions, and taking other initiatives to help individuals and communities recover.[39] For example, in some cases, leaders facilitated gatherings at which, during a bonfire ritual, adversarial groups expressed remorse and acknowledged the harm that had been caused. In truth-telling ceremonies, participants came together through the facilitation of local leaders who had carefully prepared in advance and who subsequently conducted regular follow-up sessions with victims and perpetrators. Even though communities were generally culturally and socially conservative, gender inclusivity and participatory leadership were built into the planning from the start.[40] As a result, processes were led and facilitated by women as well as men and were inclusive of all stakeholder groups.

TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP: KEY QUALITIES

The processes in Cambodia, South Africa, and Sierra Leone illustrate that leaders of transformative reconciliation are usually direct stakeholders in the process. Of the 20 interviewees, 16 played leadership roles in processes that took place in their home countries. The fact that leaders are rooted in the conflicts they address, as opposed to being outsiders, gives them the credentials, insights, and understanding they need to craft transformative reconciliation. Transformative leaders are realists who are deeply familiar with the constraints and possibilities in their contexts and base their strategies on this knowledge. They are also aware of, and adept at, managing the expectations, needs, fears, and aspirations of stakeholders. Such leadership requires a complex combination of skills and commitment; an in-depth historical understanding of the root causes driving conflict, including the motivations, aspirations, and grievances of stakeholder groups; and an ability to see things as they are and not as one would like them to be.

The findings also show that transformative leadership often includes a willingness to acknowledge, address, and disrupt the legacies and traumas resulting from violence.

This quality was evident in processes in Burundi, Kenya, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Somalia, Finland, and Cambodia. Leaders can act in creative and courageous ways by pointing out legacies of violence, injustice, and abuse in society. But this also means that leaders and beneficiaries of reconciliation processes may need to recognize the legacy of psychological harm within themselves.[41] Such legacies should not be viewed as a weakness. Leaders of the processes examined who were self-aware and reflective, and who had taken steps to acknowledge and consider psychological health, were often better able to facilitate understanding and empathetic engagement in culturally, politically, and gender-sensitive ways. Their inclusive approaches furthered the process of reconciliation.

Transformative leaders bring others on board to work toward a more inclusive, participatory, and empowering future. They understand that reconciliation is seldom achieved by one process or one leader, and that to be transformative, reconciliation efforts must be collective, persistent, and participatory. This involves mediating between the existential needs, interests, and fears of different stakeholders, including groups most harmed by conflict or those involved indirectly through proxies but with enough power to decisively influence outcomes. When leaders help conflict parties channel their interdependent interests into a common pursuit, transformative reconciliation can make incremental and meaningful advances, as seen, for example, in the processes in Nepal, Myanmar, South Africa, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Somalia, and Sierra Leone.[42] To make the processes inclusive, leaders must find ways to communicate clearly, reaching across the divide separating groups while also working among stakeholders within a single group.

Signs of Progress

Transformative reconciliation implies profound change. Even so, it remains a difficult and complex undertaking to identify, recognize, track, and sustain the key indicators of such change. For example, reconciliation is often associated with the cessation of violence, and yet reconciliation can also make significant strides forward during periods of escalating violence. This raises the question, what are some reliable signs that reconciliation is on its way toward transformative outcomes? The interviewees identified four signs of progress, each of which is illustrated below with one or two examples of pertinent processes. Taken together, these four signs form an important coordinate for transformative reconciliation.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE NEED FOR A COMMON FUTURE

Acknowledgment of interdependence as a keystone in the Northern Ireland peace process and in South Africa. The 1998 Good Friday Agreement brought to a formal end the conflict between the Protestant Unionist and Catholic Republican communities in Northern Ireland.[43] This process favored a pragmatic approach founded in the shared acknowledgment that the conflict had become too costly to justify and that a peaceful future would be possible only if Catholics and Protestants could agree to jointly govern the territory in some way. Unionists and Republicans had to acknowledge that peace required compromises and shared governance. The Good Friday Agreement successfully de-escalated political violence, saw important policy reforms implemented, and guided vital institutional changes brought about by an Equality Commission.[44]

To date, the communities continue to grapple with past harms, but there is little doubt that, despite its limitations,

the Good Friday Agreement set Northern Ireland on a road to recovery in ways that would have been unthinkable not long before its signing. The agreement still stands as a decisive example of reconciliation. Following the political agreement, civic dialogue processes began to explore how to deal with the past in both informal and formal ways. Arguably, however, it was the adoption of a vision of a common future, before turning to deal with the troubled past, that enabled the people of Northern Ireland to transform the conflict into a much less violent, albeit hesitant, sense of coexistence.

In South Africa, too, the reconciliation process evolved in such a way that the broad parameters of a shared future would be agreed upon before the country turned to deal with its abusive past. The political negotiations and compromises resulting in the interim and then final constitution preceded the establishment of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Preceding both the commission and the constitutional negotiations were the so-called talks about talks—informal meetings that offered essential preparation for the formal processes to follow. It was during these early meetings, for example, that parties for the first time acknowledged to one another that their respective futures were inextricably entwined and that failing to grasp this in any meaningful or ethical way had been a fatal flaw of apartheid.

CONCRETE MEASURES TO MITIGATE AND REPAIR PAST AND ONGOING HARM AND TO PREVENT FUTURE HARM

The reconciliatory power of acknowledging harm in Franco-German relations. Following World War II, Franco-German reconciliation was high on the agendas of both countries. One initiative involved partnerships between German and French cities that enabled economic and

French President François Hollande (left) and German President Joachim Gauck (right) stand with Robert Hébras in the ruins of the French village Oradour-sur-Glane on September 4, 2013. Hébras was one of the few survivors of the Nazi massacre of the village in 1944. (Photo by Phillipe Wojazer, Pool/AP)

civil society cooperation. However, deep pain, grievances, and divisions remained, fueled by memories of incidents such as the Oradour massacre. On June 10, 1944, German troops massacred 642 people in the French village of Oradour-sur-Glane, killing almost every inhabitant and those passing through.[45] The ruins of the village were subsequently preserved by the French government as a symbol of war and atrocity.

Robert Hébras, one of six survivors of the massacre and a lifelong advocate for Franco-German reconciliation as well as a former guide at the ruins of Oradour, offers a compelling example of how to keep the memory of a deeply harmful past alive in pursuit of reconciliation. Hébras met numerous visitors, including many from Germany, at the massacre site. One visit by a group from Germany was so moving that it inspired the development of a play to foster reconciliation between the two

countries.[46] This eventually led to the production of a musical, *Mademoiselle Marie*, which tells the story of the war, its impact on Oradour-sur-Glane, and the complexities and challenges of reconciliation. Today, it stands out as a grassroots, arts-based reconciliation initiative, seeking to acknowledge the past and heal relationships. The musical premiered in Cadolzburg, Germany, in 2015 and was made into a film in 2016. It was first performed in Oradour in 2017, where it received a warm reception from community members and political representatives.

At a more formal level, on September 4, 2013, German president Joachim Gauck, accompanied by French president François Hollande and Hébras (then one of the few living survivors of the massacre), made a public visit to the ruins of Oradour. During his memorial speech, Gauck became the first German head of state to acknowledge publicly the suffering and loss of the people of Oradour.[47]

This example demonstrates the power of both concrete and symbolic acts that may provide some degree of recognition and restoration of harmed relationships many decades after violence and atrocity. It also highlights the impact that grassroots initiatives can have in shifting perceptions and opening opportunities for communities to come to terms with deeply divisive societal issues.

IMPROVED LEVELS OF TRUST BETWEEN STAKEHOLDERS

Trust-building in Myanmar in the context of a genocide, an ongoing civil war, and a military coup. Rakhine State in Myanmar is experiencing an ongoing complex emergency with grave humanitarian and political consequences. In August 2017, the Myanmar military launched a brutal campaign, which has been the subject of an ongoing investigation by the International Criminal Court, as well as the International Court of Justice, as an act of genocide against the Rohingya community, who are long-time Muslim inhabitants of the region.[48] Rakhine State has a long history of ethnoreligious and political conflict, insurgencies, state-led repression, and discrimination against the Rohingya.[49] In this context, talk of swift recovery would be both unrealistic and irresponsible. The focus of some reconciliation work has thus been on achieving more modest goals, such as building trust, developing resilience, and taking interim measures to mitigate community-based ethnic conflicts. For example, by establishing and guiding a range of local peace committees, a team of local and international supporters was able to mobilize 450 community leaders from diverse ethnic backgrounds. These leaders then initiated events and processes across Rakhine State in 2018 and 2019 in which thousands of local citizens have since participated.

In this highly sensitive context, the local peace committees' work has focused on gender and ethnic inclusion; trust-building through education; the provision of food aid, health, education, and other services; and the facilitation of meetings between representatives of different ethnic communities and political leaders. Cultural and social relations within communities are beginning to shift toward accommodation and inclusion, with nationalist extremism and discrimination slowly losing some ground. This granular, thoroughly bottom-up approach has produced modest but important progress in trust-building.

MEANINGFUL INCLUSION OF MARGINALIZED AND MINORITY GROUPS

Inclusion of women's voices in dominant war narratives and the promotion of ethnic coexistence in Sri Lanka. Following the Sri Lankan civil war, which lasted from 1983 to 2009, civic leaders began working to make the ways in which the past violence was being remembered, both within the national public sphere and within local communities, more gender-sensitive and ethnically inclusive.[50] One locally developed initiative led by a Sri Lankan woman sparked an oral history project that in 2012 and 2013 began to document the voices and stories of women that were missing from the dominant narratives. This initiative, called the "Herstories Project," culminated in official recognition, with part of the project's autoethnographic archives being included in the Sri Lankan national archives.[51]

The Herstories Project also led to the development of a community-level reconciliation process focused on changing behavior and mindsets about gender and ethnic inclusion in conflict-affected ethnic communities. This process required first working with Tamil and Sinhalese communities separately to prepare them for subsequent direct dialogue.[52] Steps in the process included organizing information sharing and training sessions to counteract harmful stereotypes and ideologies, and then facilitating intracommunal storytelling sessions to empower individuals to express themselves effectively and to begin to come to terms with harm and betrayal. The process helped to foster some degree of empathetic understanding between the two groups and contributed to the recognition of women's war stories.

SIGNS OF PROGRESS: KEY ELEMENTS

Signs of progress in transformative reconciliation become increasingly evident as communities and societies are led toward acknowledging an interdependent future as well as past and present harm in ways that those who suffered violations find adequate, sincere, and credible. This may involve memorialization, recognition, meaningful inclusion, acknowledgment, public truth-telling processes, or various forms of communal and livelihood restoration. Public or official recognition of the voices and inclusion of marginalized and minority groups (such as occurred in the processes in Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Myanmar, and Kenya), truth-telling processes, and acknowledgment may offer a measure of emotional satisfaction for some victims.

At a national level, truth and reconciliation commissions are generally effective in countering crude forms of public denial about past crimes. For many South Africans, having their stories documented in the public record was a form of public recognition that helped to restore some dignity lost during the apartheid era. The recognition and addition of women's war stories to the Sri Lankan national archives marked a shift in the country's dominant narrative about the war. Having both direct impact at the community level and broader societal influence, Sri Lankan women's war stories also made it harder for past crimes to be denied. Where formal mechanisms failed to have a transformative impact at the community level, grassroots efforts often proved effective, particularly in terms of addressing the concerns of victims. Civic leaders displayed the perseverance, patience, and contextual understanding required for transformative reconciliation.

Trust also acts as a reliable, flexible, and evolving marker for transformative reconciliation, although it is not easy to track or measure. In the cases examined in this study, trust was evident in the willingness of parties to enter processes and stay engaged with one another, which over time resulted in increased empathy. Despite occasional (and even regular) setbacks in cases such as

Myanmar, Cambodia, Sierra Leone, and Sri Lanka, trust gradually deepened among key participants in the respective reconciliation processes included in this study. Trust-building requires demonstrated commitment to a mutually agreed-upon process; improved understanding of the perspectives, motives, behavior, and needs of the other; and the perseverance to stay engaged for the long term. Starting from a thin base of minimal but sufficient trust in the potential of initial engagements to benefit all sides, relationships may gradually develop with increasing levels of trust. Although trust may fluctuate sharply at specific moments during a given process, especially during relapses into violence, in the medium-to-long term, trust generated within effective reconciliation processes is likely to continue to improve. As reconciliation processes evolve over time, groups may begin to feel more secure in relation to one another.

Another sign of progress is meaningful participation of all conflicting groups and stakeholders in the conflict. Participants may also include civil society groups, state actors, and others who may be secondary parties to the immediate conflict. Importantly, for transformative reconciliation, inclusion insists that marginalized and minority groups have a place and a voice at the table and that, like all other actors, they are treated with respect, dignity, and consideration. In the processes examined in this study, meaningful inclusion of minority groups—whether ethnic, gender, class, or religious minorities—was critical for the sustainability of those initiatives and their ability to achieve desired outcomes. This study found that women leaders were very often instrumental in leading reconciliation processes at different levels of society.[53] Several cases demonstrated women's ability to negotiate decisive shifts in power relations, not by reversing roles (and thereby retaining an inverted hierarchy) but by establishing inclusion for all. Transformative reconciliation, as it develops over time, engenders meaningful inclusion of marginalized and minority groups, leads to more effective outcomes, and contributes to recognizable change.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This report has illustrated the importance of carefully crafted processes, insightful and inclusive leadership, and a set of signs of substantive progress as coordinates that collectively offer reliable guidance for developing transformative reconciliation processes. All too often, disconnections exist between reconciliation policies, funding, practice, and beneficiaries. The coordinates identified in this report can help those seeking to design, implement, facilitate, or lead reconciliation efforts to create processes that bridge divides and build connections. Importantly, these findings and recommendations are derived not from ideal notions of what reconciliation "should be," but from a realistic appreciation of what reconciliation processes look like on the ground, with all their imperfections, challenges, and shortcomings. Within this guiding framework, the six recommendations presented below offer practical suggestions for supporting more adaptive, nonviolent, and collaborative approaches to reconciliation and for designing and implementing processes that are at once realistic, impactful, and transformative.

Plan for multiple, concurrent, coordinated, and long-term processes that allow for ongoing consultation with stakeholders and adaptive learning. Transformative reconciliation requires concurrent processes at different levels of society with coordination and adaptation over time. External supporting bodies such as foreign governments, international NGOs, the United Nations, and other bilateral and multilateral entities need to plan for flexible time frames, design adjustments, and creative partnerships in the short, medium, and long term, given the enormous challenges involved

in developing effective partnerships that can contribute to meaningful change.

- *Short-term goals* must be concrete and context-specific to help build trust. They may include dialogue, collaborative action to address urgent needs on the ground, and appropriate and meaningful acts of symbolic reconciliation.

- *Medium-term goals* should include developing processes that are inclusive of marginalized and minority groups and that nurture increasing trust among stakeholders. Another medium-term goal should be to build on initial progress and lay the groundwork for a long-term engagement. External support for reconciliation often successfully stimulates short-term gains only to withdraw prematurely as policy or political priorities change.

- *Longer-term goals* must include effective redress of harm inflicted during conflict, as well as structural reforms necessary to build justice and foster improvements in people's daily lives. Truth and reconciliation commissions and other mechanisms designed to publicly address past harm need to coordinate with existing and emerging civic and grassroots initiatives.

Identify and support local individuals to lead processes. Strategic effort should be invested in identifying and supporting credible leaders already guiding informal processes in their communities or institutions. Such leaders have a nuanced understanding of context. They often acknowledge and challenge legacies

Australian and Australian Aboriginal flags fly on the Sydney Harbour Bridge on January 14, 2023. In March 2000, a quarter of a million people partici-pated in the Walk for Reconciliation across the bridge to express support for a national apology to the Aboriginal community. (Photo by SCM Jeans/iStock)

of violence at individual and societal levels and have a track record of inclusive and empowering leadership. Leaders' ability to adapt and reinvent reconciliation processes in the wake of formal and institutional failure needs to be seen as a strength and not as a weakness. Leaders can be divided into at least three categories: those who lead local reconciliation initia-tives from the outside; those who credibly represent a group within a larger reconciliation process; and those who become the face of a reconciliation process without belonging to any particular group. Leaders who become the face of reconciliation in their commu-nities are often viewed by fellow citizens as a moral compass that guides reconciliation. Such leaders have risen above the conflict, have convening power, and are trusted within their communities. Local leaders are also well positioned to identify resources—human,

financial, cultural, and institutional—that are already available within a society and that could be pooled with external resources to create an authentic and effective partnership.

Provide reconciliation support in the form of locally led partnerships between international, national, and local processes. Efforts to foster transformative re-conciliation must acknowledge the importance of local leaders and complementary hosting organizations that could be the main points of coordination for reconcilia-tion initiatives on the ground. To involve local leadership meaningfully in this way requires careful coordination between processes already present and external (often international) sources of support. Such partnerships may involve funding agencies, civil society organizations, insider mediators, grassroots activists, NGOs, and other

actors who support reconciliation efforts.[54] Improving the impact of reconciliation also requires coordination between community-based and national initiatives. This involves moving away from strictly causal approaches (B is caused by A) and toward more interconnected processes that can function, for instance, as complementary (B supports and reinforces A), as scaling up (B deepens and grows the impact of A), or as transformative (B transforms A). It is possible, for example, that community-level and grassroots initiatives add depth to national-level processes such as truth and reconciliation commissions and tribunals. Civic initiatives can also help to sustain public awareness, shift perspectives, and stimulate meaningful government action. For their part, national processes can inform and provide essential context, wider reach, and guidance to local initiatives.

Recognize that transformative reconciliation can leverage the productive tension between different understandings of justice. Interviewees in this study often referred to "justice," but in doing so they highlighted two different understandings of the term. Most interviewees viewed justice as emerging during and from inclusive, fair, and relational dialogue among adversaries as well as those harmed by conflict. Other interviewees, however, understood justice to be procedures proposed (often by international actors) from outside a community. These procedures may take the shape of formal institutions such as special courts, tribunals, truth and reconciliation commissions, and other forms of transitional justice and international law. These two notions of justice may seem at first to be contradictory and mutually exclusive, one seeing justice as context-specific and emerging during reconciliation, the other having a predetermined understanding of justice. However, the tensions between these two understandings of justice may lessen as reconciliation develops and processes adapt and evolve over time. If managed correctly, this productive tension may eventually produce a shared sense of justice, but not before all parties are sufficiently included in the shaping and gradual development of this process.

Justice viewed as emergent rather than preexistent opens up pathways for reconciliation processes to start even if stakeholders do not initially share a common understanding of what justice is. Gradually, as stakeholders develop a consensus about what justice should look like, they may find that their consensus overlaps with more institutional forms of justice. This convergence is likely to foster a greater sense of ownership of those forms among local stakeholders. Significantly, reconciliation processes that make no reference to justice may appear to improve relationships in the short term, but unless those processes shift structural injustices that are linked to the root causes of conflict, long-term transformation will not occur.

Ensure that meaningful inclusion, gender reform, justice, and redress are nonnegotiable. Principles of inclusion, justice, and redress should inform reconciliation policy, planning, and programming in ways that make those principles impossible to disregard. Policies and practices that foster inclusion and transform gender relations must be in place from the initial design of reconciliation processes. They must better address underlying and interconnected issues at communal and national levels. Policies and practices must also extend beyond filling participation quotas, providing seats at the table, or making promises that are unlikely to be fulfilled. The goal should be to prioritize the perspectives and needs of minority and marginalized groups, including those who have suffered harm, seeking to restore and build more inclusive and just communities and societies. Transformative reconciliation is grounded in the pursuit of a future society in which all members enjoy a sense of ownership and belonging. Concrete steps toward this goal must be developed and agreed to by all stakeholder groups—and must be continually reassessed. Reconciliation pathways should lead toward a more just society that respects and protects human rights, including access to justice and free speech, unhindered political and economic participation, and the dismantling of barriers to the inclusion of marginalized and minority groups.

Integrate psychosocial and trauma-healing support into reconciliation initiatives. Processes must be based on thoughtful approaches that enable greater understanding of trauma, resilience, and healing. They should offer opportunities for exploring the cultural and systemic origins of and responses to trauma, which are likely to differ from one context to another. Processes should also promote awareness of individual psychological health and ways for individuals, groups, and society to acknowledge past harm, mitigate present harm, and prevent future harm. Trauma-healing and psychosocial support approaches should avoid harmful exposure to secondary trauma, threatening or one-sided conversations that do not offer space for exchange and response, and empty promises that could lead to retraumatization. In this regard, reconciliation policy and programming should pay careful attention to meaningful, attainable, context-sensitive, inclusive, and culturally relevant repair.

Notes

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11. Interviewees were drawn from various networks of professionals in the peacebuilding field using a mixed method of expert consultation and convenience sampling. A preliminary list of potential interviewees was identified based on discussions with and recommendations from experts in the field of peacebuilding. The final list of interviewees was then selected based on interviewees' accessibility and availability. The interviewees' willingness to talk about their work in politically sensitive contexts made this study possible, and to respect those sensitivities, all interviewees have been given anonymity.

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