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This Code of Conduct is the result of extensive consultations with IA’s trustees, staff, partners, donors and other interested individuals. It has been a collaborative effort for which thanks are due to a great many people. In particular, IA would like to extend its appreciation to those outside the organisation who have devoted so much of their valuable time to improving and developing this document. The long list of contributors and members of the Code of Conduct Advisory Group include: Patricia Feeney, Mukesh Kapila, Judith Large, Agnes Callamard, Jan Ruyssemaars, Anne van Leeuwen, Andy Carl, Leah Levin, Gunnar Sorbo, Malcolm Blakeney and Norbert Ropers. IA would also like to express its particular thanks to Danida, Novib and Sida for their financial and intellectual guidance and support.
Background
International Alert (IA) was founded in 1985 by a group of human rights advocates including Martin Ennals, the former Secretary-General of Amnesty International, in response to the growing concerns expressed by many working in international development agencies, human rights organisations and those involved in the issues of ethnic conflict and genocide. They recognised that the denial of human rights often led to internal armed conflicts which, in turn, inevitably undermined efforts to protect individual and collective human rights and to promote sustainable social and economic development.

International Alert’s Mission
IA is a non-governmental organisation committed to the just and peaceful transformation of violent conflicts. Our objective, as stated in our Memorandum of Association (see below), is to "relieve the poverty, suffering and distress" of peoples at risk from such conflicts through the realisation of a just and lasting peace within conflict-affected societies. As part of the international human rights and humanitarian community, IA seeks to advance individual and collective human rights within these societies by helping to identify and address the root causes of the violence and contributing to the transformation of the conflicts. Moreover, IA recognises the capacity of people to resolve their own conflicts and believes that they must be the primary actors in building sustainable peace.

International Alert’s Role
The process towards a just peace requires sustainable reconciliation among the different parties to the conflict. Such a process demands time, patience and protracted engagement in constructive efforts leading to medium and long-term change. We work with individuals and organisations from different levels and sectors of society with a capacity to contribute to a constructive transformation of the conflict. These may include non-governmental and grassroots organisations and political, economic, social/cultural, research/academic, military and religious institutions and the private sector.

In its work with these actors, IA has many diverse roles to play. They range from the facilitation of peace processes and supporting the mediation efforts of others to peace-orientated development work amongst grassroots organisations. By contributing to building up constituencies for peace, supporting local efforts and helping to develop and strengthen local capacities, we aim to empower constituencies for peace. Furthermore, we seek to create spaces for dialogue and work in collaboration and complementarity with individuals, organisations, governments and other institutions. At all times, we seek to promote mutual respect, co-operation and understanding within societies affected by conflict in the belief that lasting peace and security are dependent upon the recognition of the human dignity of all people.

Code of Conduct
This code of conduct aims to provide an ethical framework for conflict transformation work. It consists of guiding principles for the organisation and the development of policies on human rights, impartiality and working in partnerships. It includes further discussion on issues relating to human rights and impartiality (Appendix One) and is based on the lessons learned and experience acquired in the course of IAs work (Appendix Two). This is a living document designed to be updated and revised as evolving experience and practice require.

1 The Memorandum of Association of Standing International Forum on Ethnic Conflict, Genocide & Human Rights - International Alert (1985) sets out the organisation’s mission as follows: “The objects of the Association are firstly to relieve poverty, suffering and distress; secondly, to advance the education of the public by the promotion of research into the causes and effects of conflict...and research into the maintenance of human rights and development of economic well being in the context of such conflict and to disseminate the useful results of such research and, thirdly, to promote all means of resolution and conciliation of such conflict and reparation in relation to the same so as to assist the resolution of such conflict such charitable objects to be carried on anywhere in the world.”
GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION WORK

A. PRINCIPLES

1. Primacy of People in Transforming Conflicts
   We believe that genuine conflict transformation is only possible with the participation and involvement of those most affected by the conflict.

2. Humanitarian Concern
   Our primary motivation is the alleviation of human suffering and our engagement in situations of violent conflict is driven principally by concern for the societies and peoples at risk from such conflicts.

3. Human Rights and Humanitarian Law & Principles
   We are committed to the principle and practice of promoting human rights in our work in situations of violent internal conflict. We urge compliance with international humanitarian law & principles and respect for human rights amongst all parties to the conflict.

4. Respect for Gender and Cultural Diversity
   We respect the dignity and cultural diversity of all peoples and we make no discrimination on grounds of nationality, race, class or gender or religious, cultural or political beliefs. We recognise and endeavour to build upon the capacities of people to resolve their own conflicts and we support the distinctive peacemaking roles of women in societies affected by violent conflict.

5. Impartiality
   We endeavour to be inclusive in our work, seeking access to the relevant parties to the conflict. We do not take sides in conflicts and we derive guidance from our adherence to the principles outlined in this Code which we strive to advance in appropriate ways at all times.

6. Independence
   We are an independent organisation, free to formulate policies and operational strategies in accordance with our legally registered aims and the principles expressed in this Code.

7. Accountability
   We are morally responsible to those whom we seek to assist and accountable to those with whom we work. We are bound by UK Charity Law through our trustees and accountable through regular reporting mechanisms to our donors. As a means of enhancing accountability, we endeavour to be open and transparent in our work.

8. Confidentiality
   Whilst endeavouring to be open and transparent, we are committed to maintaining confidentiality in situations where the effectiveness of our programmes or the security of our staff and partners may be at risk. Furthermore, we believe that, in most cases, conflict transformation work is best done discreetly.

9. Partnerships
   We are committed to working in collaboration and complementarity with individuals, organisations, governments and other institutions which can contribute to the prevention and resolution of conflict. In particular, we believe sustainable conflict transformation is dependent upon effective co-operation with individuals and organisations within conflict-affected societies.

10. Institutional Learning
    We are committed to building up our collective pool of knowledge, institutional memory and experience through undertaking regular reviews and evaluations of our work and developing the skills of all our staff. Furthermore, we endeavour to share the lessons we learn with relevant individuals and organisations who may benefit from them and, in turn, learn from the experiences and knowledge of others.
B. COMMENTARY

Peace is not merely the absence of war. In developing ways of contributing to the transformation of violent internal conflict, we are committed to pursuing a just and lasting settlement through wholly peaceful means recognising that non-violent conflicts can be a constructive force for change. We work towards empowering people to make peace by supporting local efforts, helping to develop and strengthen local capacities and, more generally, building peace constituencies. Further, we seek to create spaces for dialogue at different levels and sectors within societies in conflict and work in collaboration and complementarity with organisations, governments and other institutions.

Ultimately, building sustainable peace involves transforming situations characterised by violence and fear, thereby creating an environment in which peace, respect for human rights and participative democracy can take root and where differences and disputes can be settled non-violently. The process towards a just peace requires sustainable reconciliation among the different parties to the conflict. Such a process demands time, patience and protracted engagement in efforts leading to constructive medium and long-term change.

1. Primacy of People in Transforming Conflicts
We recognise the capacities of people to resolve their own conflicts and we believe that the people whom they affect should be the primary actors in, and the driving force behind, their successful transformation. Indeed, effective conflict transformation is only possible with the consent and participation of those most affected by the conflict and we are committed to strengthening the capacities of local actors and organisations to contribute to peacemaking and peace-building within their societies.

2. Humanitarian Concern
Our primary motivation is the alleviation of human suffering and our engagement in situations of violent conflict is driven principally by concern for the societies and peoples at risk from such conflicts. As part of the humanitarian and human rights community, we strive to protect the most fundamental human right of all – the right to life – by addressing the root causes of conflicts and contributing to their peaceful and just transformation.

3. Human Rights and Humanitarian Law & Principles
We are committed to the principle and practice of promoting individual and collective human rights in our work in situations of violent internal conflict. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights serves as our basic frame of reference and we seek to promote the observance of the fundamental principles enshrined therein. Furthermore, we are committed to encouraging observance amongst all parties of minimum standards of human rights and humanitarian principles contained in Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions and Protocol II. We are committed to pressing for international human rights standards to be recognised and incorporated in settlement agreements and for the establishment and development of effective institutions for the protection, promotion and implementation of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. We are also committed to supporting measures which address the problems of impunity and injustice, historical truth and compensation for victims.

4. Respect for Gender and Cultural Diversity
We endeavour to respect the dignity and cultural diversity of all peoples and we make no discrimination on grounds of nationality, race, class, gender, or religious, cultural or political beliefs. Furthermore, in designing and implementing programmes and activities, we strive to ensure sensitivity to local cultures and respect for traditional methods and customs of conflict resolution as well as recognising the primacy of local actors in bringing about the transformation of the conflict.

We explicitly recognise the particular and distinctive peacemaking roles played by women in communities afflicted by violent conflict. We endeavour to ensure that this potential is supported not diminished by our programmes and we are committed to strengthening the capacities of women’s organisations to contribute to sustainable peace.

5. Impartiality
The principle of impartiality is strictly adhered to at all times. We therefore endeavour to be inclusive in our work, seeking access to relevant parties to the conflict. By impartiality we mean not to take sides in conflicts. It is a commitment to serve all parties, discriminating against none. Although impartial in as far as we conduct our work...
among different conflict parties, we are not neutral in terms of the principles and values we adhere to which we must in appropriate ways work to advance at all times.

In our work, we frequently come into contact with parties suspected of, and responsible for, grievous human rights abuses. Indeed, such contact may be a requirement of successful conflict transformation work. However, it in no way implies agreement with, or support for, the views or objectives of those parties. Equally, it does not signal acceptance of, or approval for, the activities or methods employed by such groups in pursuing their particular agendas.

Our engagement in situations of internal conflict is dictated only by our capacity to assist positively in moving the peace process forward and is conditional upon an invitation to engage by interested parties, sectors or institutions within civil society or by relevant national or international actors. Our adherence to the principle of impartiality precludes us from engaging in any activity which furthers the personal or collective ambitions of any individual or group in so far as those ambitions conflict with the primary goal of transforming the conflict.

6. Independence
We are an independent organisation seeking to contribute to the transformation of violent internal conflicts. Whilst we welcome and solicit advice from our partners, donors and other interested organisations, we are free to determine policies and operational strategies in accordance with our legally registered aims and the principles expressed in this Code.

In endeavouring to fulfil its aims and objectives, the organisation does not allow itself to be used by governments or other bodies in ways which conflict with or contradict those objectives or the principles which inform them. Likewise, the assistance we receive and offer will be used strictly in accordance with the principles, aims and needs identified in our programmes and not to further the interests, political or otherwise, of any particular donor, government or party to the conflict.

7. Accountability
We are morally responsible to those whom we seek to assist and accountable to those with whom we work. We are bound by UK Charity Law through our trustees and accountable through regular reporting mechanisms to our donors. We endeavour to be open and transparent in our work by communicating our mission, objectives, policies, operational practices, methods and activities, and management and decision-making procedures to relevant parties so as to ensure the continued good faith and trust of our partners, donors and the general public.

8. Confidentiality
As an organisation engaged in sensitive and sometimes dangerous work, we recognise the potential risks to staff and those with whom we work. Accordingly, we endeavour to take every precaution to ensure those risks are minimised and we do not divulge information which might endanger their security. Equally, when the trust of those with whom we work is dependent upon confidentiality, we do not publish, disseminate or otherwise divulge information which might prejudice or undermine the work we are engaged in. We believe that conflict transformation work is often most effective when conducted in a low-profile manner.

9. Partnerships
We believe that progress in conflict transformation is best made through a process of co-operation in which responsibilities are shared and roles clearly identified. An essential element of our work is to foster and promote the capacities and abilities of local organisations, peacemakers and peace advocates. This may be through developing effective relationships, participating in relevant NGO consortia and networks, both locally and internationally, and avoiding actions which might cause rivalry or competition with or among our partners.

10. Institutional Learning
We believe in building up our collective pool of knowledge, institutional memory and experience through fostering and developing the skills of all our staff. We also acknowledge the importance of drawing lessons from conflicts around the world, sharing them with relevant individuals and organisations and learning from the experiences of others. Furthermore, we are committed to pursuing a long-term approach to our conflict transformation work and in the interests of continual improvement, we are also committed to undertaking regular reviews and evaluations of the different programmes. These reviews will be used to inform our planning and will provide the basis for material reflecting best practice in the field.
HUMAN RIGHTS AND CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION WORK

A. BASIC POSITION

International Alert considers itself a part of the human rights and humanitarian community without being a human rights organisation in the traditional sense. Historically, non-governmental organisations working in the area of human rights have focused on documenting and denouncing human rights violations, and campaigning against parties associated with such abuses.

IA’s approach is to contribute to the just and peaceful transformation of the conflicts. The rationale behind IA’s work has always been that conflict transformation work supplements and supports the work of promoting and protecting human rights and humanitarian law – in times of peace or in times of war. Given that human rights abuses are often a precursor to, and always a consequence of, violent conflict, the heart of IA’s work is to contribute to the protection of individual and collective human rights by helping to empower people to address the root causes of the violence.

Such an approach is necessarily comprehensive in that it encompasses economic, social and cultural as well as civil and political rights. IA therefore focuses on a broad range of issues in its work including: human rights, sustainable development, democracy, demilitarisation, and healing and reconciliation. In addition, it urges compliance with internationally-recognised standards of human rights and humanitarian law & principles as well as instruments on related issues such as light weapons or the use of mercenaries and landmines. It is these standards, as embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and supplemented by Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions and Protocol II which inform IA’s core values. It should be stressed, however, that IA’s function is not to catalogue or denounce abuses of these rights, but rather to help promote and encourage observance of the standards cited above.

B. PRINCIPLES FOR THE INCORPORATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMANITARIAN LAW

The aim of the principles and guidelines outlined below is to give expression to our commitment to incorporating human rights and humanitarian law & principles into our conflict transformation work. The opportunities conflict transformation NGOs may have in terms of gaining access to, and communicating with, members of civil society, state actors or armed opposition groups bring with them clear responsibilities which we both acknowledge and accept. At the same time, we see our role as principally that of supplementing and supporting those directly involved in the work of promoting and protecting human rights and humanitarian law & principles.

1. Promotion of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law & Principles

International Alert believes that conflict transformation work can and must contribute to the promotion of human rights and humanitarian law & principles. Accordingly, we are committed to raising awareness and promoting observance of internationally agreed and accepted standards of human rights amongst all the parties with whom we come into contact.

2. Compliance with Relevant Instruments by State Actors and Non-State Entities

Given that non-state entities engaged in conflict are not signatories to international and regional human rights and humanitarian treaties and therefore not formally accountable to the international community, International Alert encourages observance of human rights and humanitarian law & principles amongst these groups as well as amongst state actors.

3. Incorporation of Human Rights in Peace Processes and Peace Agreements

International Alert supports and encourages the inclusion of effective provisions for the observance of human rights and international humanitarian law & principles in proposed peace agreements. Such agreements should guarantee minimum standards in both the transitional and post-settlement phase, as well as provide for specific and effective implementation mechanisms and the eventual ratification of any human rights treaties to which the state concerned is not yet a party.
4. **Institutionalisation of the Protection of Human Rights**

International Alert supports the establishment of permanent, independent and effective national institutions for the long-term protection of human rights and the institution of the rule of law, including an independent judiciary and fair criminal justice system. Such mechanisms must be impartial, independent and competent with the necessary powers and resources to be effective. They should conform to international guidelines and must never be a substitute for a fair and independent judicial system. International Alert also supports the establishment and development of institutions and mechanisms which address the problems of impunity and injustice, historical truth and compensation for victims.

5. **Participation of People in Advancing Human Rights in Situations of Conflict**

International Alert recognises the importance of promoting awareness of human rights standards amongst all sections of society and strengthening local capacities to advocate for and monitor observance of human rights and humanitarian law. The participation of people and civil society organisations is key to these efforts.

C. **GUIDELINES ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMANITARIAN LAW**

While recognising the importance of principles for the incorporation of human rights into conflict transformation work, it is equally important to provide guidelines for their implementation in IA’s programmes. Among possible ways forward are the following measures:

1. **Encouraging Distribution and Study of Human Rights Material**

   The distribution and study of relevant human rights and humanitarian law material such as Protocol II or Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions should be encouraged amongst stakeholders in the conflict, including civil society organisations. Likewise, during the peace process itself and in the framing of peace agreements, relevant parties should be made familiar with the standards of human rights as laid out in the Universal Declaration and other related instruments.

2. **Promoting the Human Rights of Particular Sectors**

   In situations of violent conflict, the rights of particular sectors such as women, the elderly, youth, children and minority groups may be seriously undermined or violated. The promotion of their rights and their importance in advancing the peace process should be explored and explained constructively so as to better protect these groups who are often the most vulnerable victims of armed conflicts.

3. **Addressing Accountability of Combatants to Humanitarian Law & Principles**

   Civilians are the principal victims of internal conflicts. The promotion of codes of conduct for combatants and in particular their adherence to international humanitarian law & principles is vital for the protection of civilians and communities who are forced to live through armed conflicts. Encouraging adherence to humanitarian law amongst non-governmental entities as well as governments themselves is often one of the first steps in advancing peace processes.
4. Advancing Human Rights Issues in Conflict Situations through Advocacy
   Situations of armed conflict often highlight other issues closely related to human rights violations such as the proliferation of light weapons in conflict areas or the use of mercenaries. Focusing on these issues through effective advocacy work at national and international levels can significantly contribute to preventing the emergence or resurgence of further violent conflicts.

5. Focusing Attention on Human Rights in the Negotiations Process
   Encouraging discussions on human rights during both the pre-negotiation and negotiation phases can help to ensure the eventual incorporation of human rights and humanitarian law provisions into peace agendas and final settlements. Such measures can consolidate the sustainability of the peace process.

6. Integrating Human Rights/Humanitarian Law & Principles into Capacity-Building
   In designing or implementing capacity-building or education projects, the possibilities of integrating human rights and humanitarian law & principles as part of the process should be explored. Certain sectors of society such as the police, members of the judiciary or teachers may require particular attention in these efforts.

7. Linking NGO and IGO Competence to the Needs of People in Conflict Situations
   In regions or countries in conflict, particular inter-governmental and non-governmental institutions linked to national, regional or international instruments may be important contributors to the peace process. Organisations such as the Office of the High Commission for Human Rights, UN Commission on Human Rights, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch or the International Commission of Jurists, amongst others, may be of assistance to parties to the conflict or members of civil society. Linking the competencies of relevant institutions or organisations to the needs of the people in conflict situations can often be a significant contribution.

8. Ensuring Complementarity with the Work of Relevant Human Rights Organisations
   Different approaches may be required to ensure the protection of human rights while dealing with conflict situations on the ground. Communication with organisations working on human rights is essential. This contributes to improved understanding of the ways in which their work can support common goals and approaches. Effective complementarity with the work of local and international human rights organisations can better bring about durable outcomes.

9. Addressing the Question of Impunity in Situations of Conflict
   The question of impunity in protracted violent conflicts can be particularly problematic. The strengthening of the judiciary as well as the establishment of effective institutions such as independent human rights commissions, truth commissions or independent tribunals are possible measures that can be taken to ensure that violations in the past do not recur in the future. Where appropriate, promoting awareness of the International Criminal Court and related institutions and mechanisms should also be encouraged.

10. Training Staff in Human Rights and Humanitarian Law & Principles
    It is essential to ensure that members of staff receive adequate training in human rights and humanitarian law in order to improve their basic competence in this field.
**A. BASIC POSITION**

Based on its experience in diverse conflict situations, IA understands impartiality to mean endeavouring to be inclusive in its work and seeking access to relevant parties to the conflict. It means not taking sides in conflict situations while deriving guidance from its adherence to the principles expressed in its Code of Conduct. It implies acquiring the capacity to work with relevant parties to the conflict without discrimination or bias, adhering to internationally-recognised standards while aiming to address or alleviate human suffering.

Impartiality is thus understood to be both a guiding principle and a means to achieve the organisation’s aim of helping to bring about a just and sustainable peace. Adhering to this approach ensures not only that conflict transformation work remains credible but also that the organisation maintains the trust of the parties to the conflict.

Although impartial in as far as it conducts its work among different conflict parties, IA is committed to principles and not neutral in terms of the values it subscribes to which it must in appropriate ways work to advance at all times. Thus, the term: principled impartiality which indicates a position that is bound to international standards of human rights and humanitarian law while maintaining an inclusive and even-handed approach with regard to the parties to the conflict. (To express this idea IA has previously used the term committed neutrality: “IA maintains a position of committed neutrality strictly bound to international standards of human rights and humanitarian law, and impartiality with regard to the parties in any conflict.” Annual Report, 1995.)

**B. GUIDELINES ON IMPARTIALITY**

The following are proposed guidelines on implementing the principle of impartiality in conflict transformation work undertaken by International Alert:

1. **Understanding the Conflict**
   Understanding the conflict by means of a thorough and balanced attempt to document and analyse the conflict, mapping out its causes and consequences, as well as exploring alternative options is a precondition for conflict transformation work. Likewise, identifying the different players, their profiles, roles, interests and objectives, possibilities and limitations is equally necessary.

2. **A Principled Framework**
   To help maintain impartiality, IA’s work is informed by a clear framework of principles and values. This framework is based on internationally-recognised standards such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions and Protocol II.

3. **Consent and Impartial Contact with the Parties**
   The organisation respects the principle of consent whereby work in a particular situation is generally subject to the consent of the parties. However, those affected by the conflict such as members of civil society and their organisations can request assistance. Responding to an invitation or exploring contact with one of the parties does not imply neglect of the others. Bridge-building at the earliest possible stages is indispensable to pursuing an even-handed approach and maintaining a delicate balance. Ensuring where possible that observations, analysis and strategy development are tested against the experience and insights of other relevant parties or organisations can prove invaluable in developing best practice.

4. **Confidentiality and Discretion**
   To enhance reliability and credibility, it is crucial that confidentiality is maintained when and where it is required. Earning the trust and the confidence of relevant parties in conflict situations requires discretion and tact, patience and respect, and contributes to the practice of impartial conduct in the work of transforming situations of violence.
5. **Consistency and Creativity**  
Consistency and coherence in the organisation’s ways of working generate trustworthiness. To maintain access to parties with different perspectives requires a consistent and balanced approach to the work and the sensitivity to nurture and support the process of relationship-building. At the same time, creativity throughout the process encourages openness to new options and opportunities. Keeping a balance between consistency and creativity helps maintain impartiality.

6. **Communication and Transparency**  
Communication is essential to the practice of impartiality. It must be clear, timely, and directed to all relevant parties leading to transparency as far as possible without compromising the requirements of confidentiality. Misunderstandings which do arise have to be dealt with in a timely and appropriate manner. At the same time, potential difficulties can be identified so that alternative ways of dealing with them may be properly explored.

7. **Consultation and Co-operation with Others**  
In complex situations of violent conflict with diverse demands and different actors, consultation with relevant parties and co-operation with others are essential. This approach implies shared responsibilities. It likewise contributes to empowering those engaged in the common endeavour and results in more constructive complementarity.

8. **Sustained Support**  
The practice of impartiality in difficult situations on the ground is best supplemented by effective back-up systems to support field persons, so that individual efforts are sustained and properly serviced in the short, medium and long-terms. Whenever necessary, advisory or support groups can be set up to ensure that efforts are sustained. Efforts for peace involve an understanding and a commitment to long-term processes.

9. **Regular Evaluation**  
To ensure that the principle of impartiality is maintained in the course of conflict transformation work, a systematic and regular evaluation of the programme is important. Internal and external reviews done rigorously and periodically with a team can provide insights from a broad range of experiences and perspectives so that any shortcomings in the practice of impartiality can be detected early on and practice revised as called for.

10. **Institutional Learning**  
To ensure that the practice of impartiality in conflict transformation work is constantly improved it is important to build up institutional knowledge. Institutional learning requires harnessing the experience and recording the reflections that could be useful for the efforts of others within the organisation. A systematic approach to the organisation’s planning ensures that the principle of impartiality becomes part of comprehensive and coherent peace efforts.
A. BASIC POSITION

International Alert works side by side with individuals and organisations committed to a common cause: helping to transform destructive conflicts by facilitating spaces for dialogue and empowering people at different levels to enhance efforts for peace. These effective working relationships are critical to IA’s ability to achieve its goals.

IA believes that in partnership the “whole” is greater than the sum of its parts. It aspires to be an organisation able to network across regions and cultures, building coalitions among non-governmental organisations and other institutions. It works with a broad range of partners varying from inter-governmental organisations and international non-governmental organisations to small grassroots organisations, women’s groups, and individuals. Relationships between organisations may be established for the duration of a one-off project or for long-term strategic coalitions. Informal relationships between individuals may pre-date and outlast any ‘official’ contact between parties, and may be equally as important. Taking into account such diversity, a general attempt can be made to categorise the kinds of individuals and organisations IA works with:

1. **Project/Programme Partners** - those with whom IA works in areas of conflict or countries of concern. These may include local, national, or regional NGOs, strategic sections of society (parliamentarians, academics, religious leaders, etc.), or individuals involved in peace-building or peacemaking.

2. **Advocacy Partners** - national or international NGOs, academics, departments of IGOs or governments (these may also be targets of advocacy work), or influential people within these organisations.

3. **Network Partners** - predominantly international NGOs, but may include government or IGO departments or prominent individuals and local organisations who work within coalitions.

4. **Donors** - these may include inter-governmental, governmental, non-governmental or private donors who support IA.

However, this categorisation is limited. It excludes informal relationships between individuals and organisations and relationships with the conflicting parties. Moreover, some partners may fit into more than one category simultaneously. Any single IA initiative may involve representatives from all of the categories.

B. PRINCIPLES OF PARTNERSHIP

1. **Building Effective Working Relationships**

For a relatively small NGO involved in conflict transformation work, the development of constructive working relationships with a wide range of actors, both inside and outside the region of conflict, is critical to its impact. Working in complementarity with others increases effectiveness, spreads the burden, encourages long-term commitment, and helps refine the methodology and objectives of the organisation.

2. **Practising Cultural Sensitivity**

IA has relationships with a wide variety of actors which may vary in nature and in their strength/depth depending on the work being undertaken and the people or organisations involved. Working together with people and organisations across the globe requires cultural sensitivity and a recognition of the diversity of relationships maintained by the organisation and its staff. Even within the same country, organisations have different working styles and cultures, and care must be taken to ensure the appropriate approach is used. Equally, IA acknowledges that relationships between organisations are largely maintained by the people inside those organisations, and endeavours to ensure that these principles of partnership are upheld by all its staff.

3. **Understanding Roles and Objectives**

For a working relationship to be effective, all the parties involved must have a clear understanding of their roles, objectives, responsibilities and rights with regard to the work being undertaken and the partnership itself. This must be based on a clear, mutually agreed common purpose and be firmly grounded within the organisations’ mandates and capacities.
4. Developing Trust and Confidence
Trust and confidence are the foundations on which effective relationships are built. Crucial to this is the ability to maintain confidentiality when the activities, security or well-being of those we work with are dependent upon it. Trust can be between individuals, or, more widely, between organisations. IA recognises that its work relies heavily on the trust engendered by its staff. Differences of opinion are inevitable, but they can be managed constructively in an atmosphere of trust, confidence and openness. Transparency in organisational aims, mandate, policies, methods, and the sources and uses of funds is a key element in building trust between organisations.

5. Sustaining Relationships
Relationships require time, effort and skill to develop and maintain. The skills and techniques needed for developing and sustaining constructive relationships are varied and complex, and include inter-personal and communication skills. Maintaining effective communication between all parties is essential to sustaining working relationships.

6. Encouraging Accountability and Responsibility
Steps must be taken to ensure all parties develop shared ownership of any planned activities. Responsibility for work undertaken, and its attendant successes, failures and repercussions must be shared. Equally fundamental to successful working relationships is ensuring mutual accountability. As a UK-based NGO, International Alert is bound by UK Charity Law through its trustees and accountable through regular reporting mechanisms to its donors. It is also accountable to its partners, supporters and those it seeks to assist. All are important and provide the basis for the organisation’s legitimacy and credibility.

7. Promoting Autonomy and Independence
In terms of power and resources, it is rare for relationships between organisations to be equal. Organisations must therefore act to complement one another without undermining each other’s autonomy and independence. IA respects and strives to promote the autonomy of its partners.

8. Learning from Experience
Working in complementarity with others is a collective learning experience for all parties involved. Common problems can be solved together and lessons drawn from experience. Joint evaluations and continuous monitoring of programmes and relationships provide an opportunity for all parties to learn from and improve upon this joint approach.

9. Reviewing Relationships
Contexts and needs change continuously, and so the demand for relationships with actors and combinations of actors will change. Organisations experience changes in staff, priorities, methods, and activities. Periodic reviews, in conjunction with partners involved in joint projects, are therefore necessary to ensure the effectiveness and quality of working relationships.

10. Accompanying Local Partners
The people and organisations affected by conflict are those best placed to bring about its transformation. IA therefore seeks to identify and accompany credible local organisations in their efforts towards peace or, in their absence, help to establish such organisations. Accompaniment is based upon listening, consultation and support, not prescription. Conflict transformation is a long-term process, and IA recognises the need for sustained support to enable partners to have a lasting impact.

11. Ensuring the Security of Staff and Partners
Many of those IA works with, particularly in regions of conflict, are involved in sensitive and sometimes dangerous situations. Accordingly, IA strives to minimise any risks to staff or partners, and does not divulge information which might endanger the security of those with whom we work.

12. Applying the Principles of Partnership Internally
The principles of working in partnership are not only applicable to IA’s work with those outside the organisation. IA endeavours to ensure that these principles are fully reflected in its own internal procedures, policies and practices.
C. GUIDELINES FOR WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

International Alert’s experience in working collaboratively with others to promote peace offers some suggestions for improving the effectiveness of working relationships.

Stage 1: Preparatory Phase

1. Understanding Working Relationships and their Context
   Developing an effective working relationship requires an appropriate understanding of the relevant organisations and the political context in which they operate in. It also demands an understanding of the dynamics of interpersonal relationships, people’s attitudes, needs and goals. Working relationships are influenced by politics, divergent ideological positions, the dynamics of power and authority and financial considerations. As part of the preparatory phase, an attempt should be made to explore the work already being undertaken by others, and the possibilities and limitations of any potential partners.

2. Identifying Partners
   A partner for a specific project may be an obvious choice, or IA might be approached by another party. At other times, though, IA itself may have to identify or help bring together credible partners for a particular piece of work. For this purpose, a number of criteria can be established, among which are: organisations or individuals sharing similar aims and objectives; the viability of organisations in their own right, or the capacity to develop into a viable organisation; the capacity to carry out the work required; the integrity and track record to be able to call on the co-operation of others; the potential to gain access to and make use of the resources required to sustain the partnership in the medium and long-term.

Stage 2: Establishing Working Relationships

3. Clarifying Roles and Responsibilities
   A working relationship is more likely to succeed if, from the outset, all parties know what they can expect from the relationship, and what is expected of them. A clear understanding of each party’s roles, tasks, rights, responsibilities, aims and objectives is essential. This might be expressed through a form of partnership agreement (or ‘Memorandum of Understanding’) appropriate to the situation and the nature of the relationship. In certain cases, informal working agreements may be more relevant. Such agreements can provide a framework for co-operation without impairing flexibility.

4. Incorporating Partners into Programme Planning
   Appropriate participation of partners in project planning can strengthen working relationships. Joint initiatives based on a consultative process, involving partners in an interactive and participatory way, can contribute to shared ownership. Wider consultation with academics, experts, other NGOs etc. can likewise bring different and valuable perspectives to planning exercises. The limitations and risks of the planned work need to be identified, and realistic targets set. Though important, such processes may require substantial efforts by all which may take time to produce results. This may have to be taken into account in the formulation of funding proposals.

Stage 3: Working Effectively Together

5. Ensuring Effective Communication and Managing Differences
   Effective communication between parties is essential to successful relationships. Managing effective working relationships requires allowing space for discussing and debating differences of opinion and the acknowledgement of mistakes. Some suggestions for improving communication include: maintaining open lines at all times; regular sharing of general information with partners; regular and constructive dialogue and consultation on processes as well as outcomes; and, the development of a common terminology or language. Identifying the most appropriate forms of communication can contribute to building and maintaining partnerships. Language itself can be a critical element. IA is based in the UK and uses English as its first language; however, this may not be the most appropriate language for communication with partners. IA therefore strives to ensure that programme staff speak languages appropriate to the region on which they work, and that documentation is translated where necessary.
6. **Improving Transparency and Accountability**
Organisational transparency can be increased through continual dialogue with relevant parties. This could include informal communication as well as regular reports and the results of reviews and evaluations. Developing effective accountability requires a statement of goals, transparency of decision-making, reporting of resource use, an appraisal process and mechanisms for holding to account. It also requires the effective dissemination of this type of information to relevant or interested parties. Clarifying roles and responsibilities early in a relationship helps to create the necessary accountability between the parties. Working in conjunction with other organisations also creates pressure to be accountable to one another.

7. **Promoting Autonomy**
NGOs must secure their autonomy and independence with regard to governments, funders and other bodies. Where the balance of power and resources is unequal in a relationship, particular care must be taken to avoid compromising autonomy. Organisational transparency and a clear identification of roles, aims and tasks in a working relationship can help to ensure that the autonomy of each party is maintained. IA must make plain its own independence and autonomy and respect that of those it works with. In its capacity-building role, one of IA's objectives is to promote the independence of its partners with a view to eventually reducing its direct involvement.

8. **Accompanying Partners**
One of IA's principal aims is to empower people to make peace by strengthening the capacities of local organisations and institutions. Accompanying partners requires a sensitive and supportive role for IA, so as to help partners more effectively contribute to making peace. This may be through providing moral, intellectual, technical or logistical support for partners. A key aspect of this process is continual assessment and evaluation of the relationship, and the level of involvement and support required of IA.

9. **Institutional Learning**
Feedback, consultation and the sharing and dissemination of information are central to collective learning. Regular reviews of relationships and joint activities, both formal and informal, are needed to ensure and improve quality and effectiveness. Monitoring and evaluation work should be a joint process involving relevant parties, and not regarded as one judging the other. The involvement of external evaluators can improve the objectivity of such exercises.

**Stage 4: Maintaining and Monitoring Partnerships**
Traditional human rights and conflict transformation organisations have adopted two distinct approaches to their work in conflict situations. Whilst the former campaigns publicly on the consequences of conflicts, namely specific human rights abuses, the latter has eschewed the public approach in favour of quietly building trust and understanding amongst the various parties to the conflict. In the past, this has led to a certain amount of tension with both sides concerned that their work is being hampered or even undermined by the other’s distinct approach and different set of priorities.

Increasingly, however, there are signs that both human rights and conflict transformation organisations are beginning to work more closely together in recognition of the fact that both share the same long-term goal of sustainable peace with social justice. Nevertheless, if this spirit of co-operation is to be further developed and expanded, it is important that the sources of tension are examined and debated openly and the outstanding issues resolved to the satisfaction of all.

**Recurring Dilemmas**

The recurring dilemma for conflict transformation organisations is how to engage individuals and groups with poor human rights records in constructive dialogue whilst upholding strict adherence to international standards of human rights and humanitarian law. This dilemma is further complicated by the question of legitimacy and to what extent contact with such parties is interpreted as tacit approval for their aspirations and methods.

These twin dilemmas highlight the complexities of working with both sides to a conflict. From a conflict transformation perspective, it is often counter-productive to publicly denounce human rights violators and yet not to do so leaves these organisations vulnerable to accusations of partisanship or even of collusion. Thus, it seems any organisation working in this area is confronted with a difficult choice: publicise atrocities and risk losing the trust of one side; hold back and sacrifice the confidence of the other.

**Adherence to Standards**

The solution to this particular problem must lie in the organisation’s own assertion of its integrity and credibility through open and transparent declarations of its values, principles and, when appropriate, modus operandi. In other words, adherence to and promotion of internationally recognised standards of human rights and humanitarian law must form the basis of its engagement with all sides and must be seen to be fundamental to the organisation’s ethos. This requires that all practitioners engaged in this kind of work understand the relevant human rights instruments and are qualified to educate others in how they can contribute to building a lasting peace. Human rights advocacy and insistence on minimum standards of humanitarian law is not at all the same as public denunciation of wrong-doers and should allow the conflict transformation organisation to maintain the trust of all whilst continuing to work towards reconciliation.

Of course, the confidential and necessarily low-profile nature of much of this work further complicates this already difficult and sensitive process. Reconciling the need for openness and transparency on the one hand with confidentiality and discretion on the other is a delicate balancing act fraught with potential dangers. Regardless of how open an organisation might wish to be, it must be equally conscious of the importance of maintaining confidentiality in some areas of its work. Inevitably, therefore, some of what it does in terms of promoting human rights and humanitarian law must be conducted discreetly and at times indirectly. Whether or not this encourages the perception amongst other parties and outside observers that the organisation is only paying lip service to its human rights principles is dependent to a great extent on the degree of trust it has managed to build up with all the relevant actors. In turn, of course, such trust is dependent upon an organisation’s credibility and the degree to which it has successfully articulated and communicated its principles and objectives.

**Constraints and Complementarity**

In determining those principles and objectives, however, there must be a recognition of the constraints imposed upon such an organisation by the nature of its work. Although human rights promotion and protection must be a guiding principle of this work, it may not always be possible or appropriate to advance the issues in all the ways envisaged in the guidelines. In some circumstances, much of the work may already have been undertaken by other organisations; in others, it may be detrimental to the wider process of trust and confidence building. Clearly, a conflict transformation organisation’s first priority is contributing to the peaceful and just settlement of the conflict and it is its work in this regard which constitutes its most significant contribution to human rights promotion and protection.

Of course, these considerations, important though they are, should not be seen as an attempt to diminish the role of conflict transformation organisations in promoting respect for human rights and humanitarian law. Ultimately, this respect is a fundamental and indispensable part of the search for a just
peace, the objective of all such organisations. It does highlight
the need, however, for a multi-track approach across a range
of issues involving different organisations co-operating
effectively with one another. Linking the competencies of
different organisations to particular needs and complementing
the human rights work of others can in itself make a genuine
contribution to the building of a just peace. The role of a
conflict transformation organisation is principally that of
supplementing and supporting those directly involved in the
work of promoting and protecting human rights and
humanitarian law & principles.

Taking Concrete Steps
At the same time, there is much that can be done by
individual organisations in furthering this aim of building a just
and lasting peace and in tackling the perceived conflict
between peace and justice. They must make explicit their
commitment to pressing for incorporation of these minimum
standards into both the peace process itself and any final
settlement that may emerge from it. Clearly, an end to the
hostilities is a valuable objective but in itself does not provide
for the kind of lasting peace which must be the ultimate goal of
any organisation working to transform violent conflicts.
Nor is it sufficient simply to include fine-sounding words in an
agreement. There can be no real peace so long as one or
other of the parties feels the proposed settlement fails to
address the reality of the conflict’s history. Reconciling one or
both sides’ natural desire for vengeance for past atrocities
with the need to break the cycle of violence and move into a
new, more mutually understanding relationship is often among
the most complex of the outstanding issues. Firstly, of course,
the settlement must address the immediate problem of justice
for the victims of the conflict. In South Africa and elsewhere
this has been attempted through the creation of a Truth and
Reconciliation Commission designed to discover the truth
whilst not harming the wider process of inter-racial
reconciliation. Another option might be referral of the worst
cases to an independent International Criminal Court.

Principled Approach
Secondly, the necessary instruments and mechanisms for
ensuring observance of the principles outlined in the
settlement must be established. These might include: an
independent judiciary and fair criminal justice system, freedom
of the press, effective institutions for the monitoring of alleged
human rights abuses, perhaps in the form of an ombudsperson,
and support for NGOs with expertise in the human rights field.

In conclusion, therefore, it should be stressed that the onus is
on the conflict transformation organisation itself to ensure its
actions are, and are perceived to be, conducted as openly
and transparently as possible and in accordance with its
explicitly declared values and principles. If the organisation is
clear about its methods and objectives, it reduces the risk of
misunderstanding which can so easily undermine its work.
It also provides guidelines for its staff who are often required
to play any number of roles, some of which may appear
contradictory. Prescribing the function and purpose of the
organisation can provide a clear demarcation of the roles of
the individual practitioners thereby ensuring that these roles,
be they as monitor, mediator, counsellor, observer, advocate
etc. never conflict with one another and always contribute
positively to the wider peace process.

In many respects, the perceived tension between human
rights and conflict transformation organisations need not be
one of genuine substance. For so long as an organisation
clearly defines its principles, purpose and methods and is
seen to be faithful to them in its work, it can maintain its
integrity and credibility and continue to work co-operatively
both with the conflicting parties and other interested
organisations.

Relevant Human Rights/Humanitarian Law Instruments:
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- UN Charter
- Common Article 3 Of the Geneva Conventions
- Protocols I & II to the Geneva Conventions
- Universal Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (ICL)
- Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of
  Discrimination against Women
- Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in
  Emergency and Armed Conflict
- Declaration on the Right of Peoples to Peace
- Declaration on the Prevention and Punishment of the
  Crime of Genocide
- Declaration on the Right to Development
- Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or
  Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities
- Convention against Torture and other Cruel and Inhuman or
  Degrading Treatment or Punishment
- Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial
  Discrimination
- UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement
- Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action,
  World Conference on Human Rights

Regional Human Rights Instruments
- American Convention on Human Rights
- African Charter on Human and People’s Rights
- European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights
  and Fundamental Freedoms
Peacemaking in Internal Armed Conflicts

IA has identified a number of critical concerns in addressing the problem of internal armed conflicts. First of all, the current state system is based on the integrity of the state and its sovereignty. Thus, in the present context of sovereign states and inter-governmental institutions that espouse non-interference in the internal affairs of nation states, one has to abide by the principle of consent. For a third party, consent might generally require the invitation by relevant parties to the conflict before one is involved in or is able to participate in a process.

Nevertheless, standard international practice has increasingly challenged the notion of absolute state sovereignty in this regard. Situations with serious humanitarian or human rights implications have increasingly seen the call for some form of intervention to prevent further human suffering or to help explore opportunities for peacemaking. It is for this reason that appeals or requests made to third parties by citizens or victims caught up in violent conflicts can be seriously considered.

On the practical level, there is also the difficulty of gaining access to the parties to the conflict. In addition, there may be reluctance on the part of armed opposition groups to deal with official state-centred institutions where they feel excluded or marginalised. Thus, non-governmental organisations, though relatively small and without leverage, can gain access to one or both of the parties to the conflict thereby contributing to subsequent dialogue and constructive outcomes.

Another area for consideration is the asymmetry usually associated with internal armed conflicts where inequality of power and resources can lead to the hardening of intransigent positions on the part of one or the other. A contribution in this regard could be the creation of conditions to enable parties to prepare adequately for negotiations. In particular, this may entail the provision of technical assistance or advice that encourages any of the parties to think of more peaceful alternatives.

Furthermore, unless a situation occurs where there is a recognition that the costs of conflict are no longer acceptable, then political negotiations are normally not contemplated. It is usually when the realisation occurs that the political or economic costs are far too high for the parties to sustain the war efforts that other “less costly” efforts are considered. There is, therefore, a role for those who can help the parties to the conflict recognise the cost of war and allow them to seek a negotiated way out without exposing the parties to “loss of face”. Discreet efforts that could be “plausibly denied” if unsuccessful and that could provide both parties a “safe space” or ample room to manoeuvre to come to an agreement may therefore be acceptable to the parties at this stage.

The Particular Contribution of NGOs to Peace Efforts

In the experience of non-governmental organisations, their contribution to peacemaking and peace-building can be seen principally in their work preparing the ground for efforts that can eventually result in effective peace processes. In particular, their capacity to have access to one or both parties to the conflict in an atmosphere characterised by a discreet, non-threatening approach can be a positive element. Because they are relatively small organisations with normally discreet public profiles, they can take reasonable risks for peace. Moreover, they can offer opportunities to the parties to talk and to explore negotiated paths to end violent conflicts without any pre-conditions or predisposition to certain outcomes.

State actors and UN officials often act on the public stage drawing media or public attention which may present some difficulty in the initial stages. Although not always successful, there are greater possibilities for non-governmental initiatives to be more discreet and less subject to public scrutiny and volatile reactions at the outset. Thus, this distinct contribution can be recognised with all the advantages and limitations, constraints and challenges that this undertaking entails.
Facilitation and Mediation as Process and in Stages

Facilitation and mediation are often long drawn-out processes, not merely a series of events. They are also complex processes where communication with the relevant parties in a timely and effective manner is crucial. These undertakings often require preparing the ground so that while endeavouring to bring one party to the negotiation table, steps are taken to bring the other party to an appropriate understanding of the tasks involved and the trust required to see the effort through.

Helping facilitate processes, in certain situations, may mean making contact with people who carry responsibility for the suffering of others. These efforts are undertaken to ensure that the relevant parties in turn recognise and assume responsibilities for their actions. Engaging parties in conflict transformation work is undertaken to ensure that moral responsibility is assumed, and action taken. The principal aim is to recognise who will assume responsibility, not to legitimise the parties nor to condone their causes or methods.

Confidence-building measures, combined with pressure when appropriate, may be required to advance what can often be a protracted and difficult situation. Parallel and complementary efforts are thus crucial for the success of this delicate undertaking. The principle of impartiality, however, can be put into practice taking into account the specific circumstances and complexities of different political situations.

Impartiality Related to Parallel or Multi-track Efforts

At the same time, a non-governmental organisation’s adherence to the principle of impartiality can be strengthened by its commitment to pursue parallel and multi-track efforts. Working collaboratively with other third parties involved in the peace process improves the organisation’s ability to work impartially and reduces its vulnerability to accusations of partiality.

Moreover, it is important to take note of the reality of internal armed conflicts where there are different players with diverse interests. The context of internal conflicts involves an understanding of different elements: the history and current situation, economic and power interests, perceptions and expectations, fears and feelings, values and cultures. These are among the interconnected aspects of any complex conflict situation. They operate on the level of the individual, the community, the society, the region and even globally. Players at these different levels tend to have different interests, objectives and perceptions of the rules of the game. But they can all have a role or stake in a specific conflict or its resolution. The challenge is to generate sufficient credibility together with other partners or allies so that as one gains the confidence of one party one is also able to retain the respect and trust of the other. It is therefore crucial to convey clearly to all the parties the organisation’s commitment to a negotiated approach that can constructively lead to a sustainable peace. In this way, situations of conflict can be more effectively transformed.
1. Articulating a Principled Framework
Perhaps the single most important insight that can be drawn from IA's experience is the importance of articulating a principled framework. Conflict transformation work deals with both reality and perceptions. Based on IA's experience in the field, a clear and explicit framework expressing the principles and values which guide IA's work is indispensable to avoiding any misunderstandings.

In formulating programmes and activities consistent with its values and principles, the organisation ensures that its work is not misinterpreted by parties to the conflict. It thus makes itself less vulnerable, while ensuring that those with whom it works are clear as to the principles and values that underpin the organisation’s programme objectives in specific conflict areas.

The experiences in the difficult conflict areas of Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka provide ample evidence of problems which arise when these guiding principles are not explicitly and adequately articulated and conveyed. Differences in perceptions as to the organisation’s role and aims led to serious doubts expressed as to its commitment to impartiality and human rights. A Code of Conduct that demonstrates the organisation’s adherence to a set of recognised guiding principles and which can be vigorously implemented provides a way of responding to this concern.

2. Relying on Conflict Analysis
IA's most effective programmes have been those undertaken with an in-depth understanding of the history and the socio-political context of the conflict as well as a rigorous analysis of the dynamics of the conflict and the principal actors involved. Information gathering and appropriate analysis built into the programme as part of a continuous process provides it with the capacity to engage in regular reviews that address the changing circumstances and conditions of violent internal conflicts as shown by the experience of the Burundi programme.

In brief, this effort may require, among other things: exploring the historical background and the causes of the conflict, mapping of the relevant actors at the local, national, regional and international levels, identifying existing or potential opportunities for peacemaking or peace-building as well as possible approaches able to create conditions for more viable and less violent processes.

3. Planning Programmes Coherently
In the planning of conflict transformation work, experience has shown the importance of identifying realistic objectives within a coherent framework and a given timeframe. Effective planning avoids what have at times been perceived as over-ambitious aims in IA's programmes.

Planning rooted in rigorous analysis and approached collaboratively, involving consultations with partners and relevant people/institutions, has proven to be invaluable in determining appropriate programme objectives as well as concrete projects. Moreover, it helps ensure the coherence of IA's work in general so that the different programmes can contribute to the organisation’s overall mission.

4. Working in Partnership
Sustainable conflict transformation work relies to a large extent on how IA constructs and maintains its working relationships with reliable partners. IA’s experiences indicate a number of lessons important in maintaining such partnerships: building trust, ensuring regular dialogue, maintaining confidentiality, supporting local initiatives, managing co-operation and competition and dealing with problems in an open and constructive manner.

Evaluation of IA's work with partners has shown the importance of the following: identification and consultation with partners, planning and learning to evaluate work in conjunction with partners, ensuring communication and co-ordination that clarifies the division of labour and areas of co-operation.

As IA's experience in the Great Lakes region, West Africa and South Asia has shown, sensitivity to local cultures and traditions, as well as to institutional and inter-personal relationships are equally critical to maintaining sound working partnerships.

5. Complementing the Work of IGOs/Institutions
Reflections on IA's past experience have highlighted the importance of recognising the expertise and comparative advantage of other actors, in particular those of inter-governmental organisations and relevant institutions at the national, regional or international levels. Working in complementarity with such organisations as the UN, the OAU and the EU, among others, enables more effective burden-sharing and helps to expand the “umbrella of concern”.

The origins of the Burundi programme lie in the effective collaboration between IA and the UN Secretary General's Special Representative for Burundi. Likewise, the Sierra Leone programme could have benefited from a more constructive collaboration with representatives of both the UN and the Commonwealth Secretariat.
The observation made in the evaluation regarding the manner of working in the field of conflict resolution related to the Burundi programme may be of particular relevance here: “conflict resolution work is best done quietly.” In principle, the preference is for a low-profile approach to ensure that complementarity is generally helpful.

6. Focusing on Civil Society

A review of IA’s work through the years shows much of its efforts devoted to working with relevant members of civil society. In IA’s previous work in the Philippines and Fiji, in Central America and in Colombia, across Africa, and in the former Soviet Union, attention had been focused on significant sectors of society or individuals who contributed to help create “spaces for dialogue”, to forge initiatives for peace and to explore paths towards healing and reconciliation. This work has involved women, religious leaders, teachers and educators, youth and media practitioners, among others.

Likewise, at different stages of IA’s work in both Burundi and Sri Lanka, the formation of a core of dedicated peace advocates with a potential to contribute to the building up of a constituency for peace was given priority. This process of enabling people’s participation in peace processes is a vital lesson that has been learned and has found expression in capacity-building or problem-solving workshops, in helping to facilitate study tours or exposure trips to areas with comparative experiences, in contributing to institution-building and in other relevant initiatives that could contribute to advancing the peace process.

7. Sustaining the Process

Transforming situations of violence is not an overnight undertaking. In working on conflict transformation, it has been observed that IA addresses long-term processes but has been burdened by the fact that it often finds itself relying on short-term means. IA’s income is generally restricted and defined by specific projects. In accompanying long-term efforts and in addressing the concerns and expectations of partners, it finds itself with the challenge of raising its capability to meet such requirements.

Planning and fund-raising in IA’s experience has to take into account a wider horizon and a longer timeframe that goes beyond one-off events or even a series of workshops. Its experience in accompanying partners and peace processes demonstrates the importance of a capacity to engage in sustainable efforts. Likewise, given the nature of internal armed conflicts, IA’s experience highlights the question of how to respond constructively to rare opportunities for peacemaking or peace-building which may arise in the course of its work in particular regions of conflict or on particular themes requiring advocacy or action. Its response to these concerns in a timely and effective manner impacts on its effectiveness and professional credibility.

8. Ensuring Continuous Evaluation

Another important lesson which has emerged from IA’s work is the need for continuing monitoring and assessment of the programmes and projects undertaken by the organisation.

As formative tools, monitoring and evaluation are part of the process of the implementation of programmes and need to be incorporated into planning: to review goals, to revisit approaches, to examine processes and assess outputs.

To be effective, this undertaking would require the participation of stakeholders in the planning and review of programmes. When required, external evaluators can provide valuable perspectives, as illustrated by the work of the programme team on Africa’s Great Lakes region.

Such a collaborative process, which is continuous and responsive to the changing context and content of the programmes themselves influences the setting of future goals and the types of activities that may need to be undertaken.

9. Learning as Individuals and as an Organisation

Lessons learned by members of programme teams and their partners, or by the organisation as a whole, are valuable inputs that can be seriously considered and absorbed to improve the organisation’s practice in the difficult field of conflict transformation.

Institutional learning takes place when the organisation reflects systematically on its work, assessing its strengths and weaknesses in field programmes, advocacy work or its general conduct, documenting the process of evaluation and making its reflections available to staff, relevant partners and current and potential stakeholders. This is but one among a number of significant steps the organisation is presently undertaking in this area.

**Capacity-Building** – the development of individual and collective abilities or capabilities to transform conflict from violence into a positive, constructive force. Capacity-building may also include the development of non-governmental organisations and other institutions (local government, judiciary etc.) which enable society to handle conflict constructively and without recourse to violence.

**Civil Society** – a collective entity composed of non-governmental organisations, social movements, people’s organisations, voluntary associations and professional and business groups active in society. Another definition that might be useful is: “An intermediate associational realm between state and family, populated by organisations enjoying some autonomy in relation to the state and formed voluntarily by members of society to protect their interests or values.” (Civil Society, Democratisation and Development, G. White IDS, 1994.)

**Conflict Transformation** - the process by which people change situations, relationships or structures so that they become less violent, less conflictual and less unjust. It involves exploring alternative and more peaceful ways of settling differences and disputes. By focusing on the processes by which conflict develops into violence, it addresses the root causes of violent conflicts in order to prevent their emergence or resurgence. In International Alert’s experience, conflict transformation encompasses work undertaken to prevent or resolve violent conflicts. It includes but is not limited to:

- **Conflict Prevention** – measures taken and efforts made to prevent the breakdown of peaceful conditions. It aims to prevent existing tensions from escalating into violence and to contain the spread of conflict when it occurs. Conflict prevention can also include action taken after a violent conflict to avoid its recurrence.

- **Conflict Resolution** – the process of building bridges between hostile communities, working to clarify issues which represent points of confrontation between them and creating opportunities for developing new relationships based upon a process of peaceful change and grass-roots level reconciliation.

**Facilitation** – A means of helping the conflict parties to reach a mutually satisfying agreement. It may be communication between the parties which the third party facilitates and/or private analysis of the conflict situation and possible outcomes. Facilitation indicates a lesser degree of involvement than mediation. Facilitators may be invited to help with one particular meeting, providing their technical skills, but they seldom become an integral part of the whole process as mediators do.

**Human Rights** – the set of rights of individuals and peoples in the civil and political, social, economic and cultural spheres enshrined in relevant international and regional instruments or basic charters such as the 1948 Universal Declaration, the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Among the minimum standards relevant to situations of conflict are the rights to life, liberty and security of person (in Articles 3-21 of the Universal Declaration) which form the basis for all other civil and political rights. Among the economic, social and cultural rights are the rights to work, to health and education, to organise, to social security and to leisure and culture (in Articles 23-27 of the Universal Declaration). (See Appendix One for further instruments relevant to International Alert’s work, including third generation Human Rights).

**Humanitarian Law and Principles** – standards relevant to situations of armed conflict summarised in the first place in Common Article 3 of the four Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 which provides protection to war victims, including civilians, in situations of internal armed conflict and those placed hors de combat by sickness, wounds, detention or any other cause. The four Geneva Conventions prohibit killings and torture of the above-mentioned, the taking of hostages, outrages against personal dignity, and the passing of sentences and carrying out of executions without previous judgement pronounced by a regularly-constituted court, providing fair trial guarantees. In 1977, an Additional Protocol II to the Geneva Conventions concerning internal armed conflicts was adopted which included provisions for the humane treatment of victims of wars of a non-international character.

**Impartiality** – the commitment to serve all parties in a conflict in a fair and unbiased manner, discriminating against none.
Principled Impartiality – as used in the IA Code of Conduct, indicates a position that is bound to international standards of human rights and humanitarian law & principles while maintaining an inclusive and even-handed approach with regard to the parties to the conflict. International Alert’s understanding of impartiality derives from the particular nature of its work which differs from that of humanitarian organisations engaged in disaster relief. Other definitions of impartiality include:

Impartiality (ICRC definition) – impartiality in the organisation’s practice means “no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. The ICRC endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and gives priority to the most urgent cases of distress.” Another principle developed in the ICRC’s work is neutrality which it defines to mean: “not to take sides in hostilities or engage at any time in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.” (Preamble to the Statutes of the ICRC and Red Crescent Movement adopted by the Twenty-fifth International Conference of the Red Cross in Geneva in October 1986)

Impartiality (for professionals in dispute resolution work) – impartiality is defined in “Ethical Standards of Professional Responsibility for the Society of Professionals in Dispute Resolution,” adopted 2 June 1986: “Impartiality means freedom from favoritism or bias either by word or by action, and a commitment to serve all parties as opposed to a single party.”

Mediation – A problem-solving negotiation process in which a third party works with disputants to assist them to reach a satisfactory negotiated settlement. Mediators have no authority to decide the dispute between the parties; instead, the parties empower the mediator to help them resolve the issues between them. (Thesaurus and Glossary of Early Warning and Conflict Prevention Terms: Abridged Version; Alex P. Schmid, PIOOM, 1998 quoting Chr. W. Moore, 1996.)

Partnerships – relationships of mutual support where the participants share a common sense of purpose and responsibility; key to this relationship is the process of consultation and participative approaches where the joint efforts result in meaningful outcomes.

Peace-building – the employment of measures which consolidate peaceful relations and societal institutions in order to contribute to the creation of an environment which deters the emergence or the escalation of tensions which may lead to violent conflicts.

Peace Constituencies – the coming together of people from different sectors of civil society whose prevailing interest is the development and realisation of sustainable peace.

Spaces for Dialogue – the opportunities created for relevant parties involved in actual or potential situations of conflict to engage in talks or negotiations to explore more peaceful ways of resolving differences.

Violent Internal Conflict – the use of armed force within one country by at least two parties including the government and a non-state group. There are two basic variants of violent internal conflicts: (1) when control of the state is the source of the contest; (2) when one part of the population wants to form a new state or join a neighbouring one. The most frequent underlying causes of such conflicts have been ethnic or identity-based (disputes arising out of ethnic, religious or linguistic differences); related to governance (efforts to change the form of government or the party in power); independence (either in the form of decolonisation or separatist state formation); the control of natural resources (oil, water); strategic (to gain an economic or geopolitical advantage), or territorial. (Thesaurus and Glossary of Early Warning and Conflict Prevention Terms: Abridged Version; Alex P. Schmid, PIOOM, 1998)
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*The Meaning of the Word “Humanitarian” in Relation to the Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent*, Jean Luc Blondel in ICRC Review.


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UN Human Rights Fact Sheet No. 13., UN, 1992.

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3. IMPARTIALITY IN CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION WORK


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