

Alumni Workshop

To those of you able to attend the Alumni conference last year, we give heartfelt thanks. Although it has taken some time to catch up on all of your ideas, you will note

on the alumni website that many of your suggestions are on their way. Among the many challenges that you mentioned were the following:

- Measuring the constructive impact of what we do, and working with donors on developing convincing indicators;
- Securing the will of leaders – political, military, paramilitary – to do the right thing by all of their people, not just some of them;
- The destructiveness of the inter-organizational competition (NGO's vs. IGO's) that many of you noted in the field;
- The unrealistic timeframes of many donors' funding, and their promotion of competition rather than cooperation among their grantees;
- National foreign policies of the Western world that are often destructive (this was allied to the tension between security-focused and relationship-focused coexistence work);
- Mainstreaming coexistence policies within agencies in other fields;
- The lack of an agreed upon vocabulary in this field, and the need for clearer language in order to better communicate what we do;
- The corrosive nature of corruption in many of the countries in which you work, and how to handle it;
- Consultant versus locally-led tensions in coexistence work and the related question of how to be a good consultant;
- A desire to know more about how to influence governments;
- The lack of an easily available coexistence network;
- Access to information about frameworks/practicalities/ideas about the work, which are often not available in the field.

Alumni Conference: Coexistence Work – Is it a Real Profession? May 2008

The discussion themes from the conference following the alumni workshop echoed many of those raised by the alumni and current master's students. We had a star-studded line-up of speakers to assist us with our thinking: Kaz Kuroda, from the Fragile & Conflict-Affected Countries Group Operations Policy and Country Services of the World Bank; Anita Ernstofer, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and member of the Expert Reference Group on Conflict Prevention with the United Nations Development Program; Sharon Morris, Director of Conflict

Programs at Mercy Corps; Claire Sneed of the U.S. State Department's Office of Stabilization and Reconstruction; Ambassador Ragnar Ängeby, previously head of Prevention of Violent Conflict in the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and currently Programme Director, Conflict Prevention in Practice, at the Folke Bernadotte Academy, Sweden; Joelle Jenny, from the Department for International Development's Policy and Research Division, U.K.; and Pamela Aall, Vice President for Domestic Programs, Education and Training Center, United States Institute for Peace.

Kaz Kuroda talked about the importance of the World Bank constantly learning as their work develops, and the need to establish respectful, trusted and equal partnerships where possible. *Outline of his talk available by clicking on the link in the e-newsletter.*

Anita Ernstorfer talked about the need to look at the work in a multi-sectoral way, and to support conflict-mainstreaming/conflict-sensitive development into the sustainable development, education and human rights work. Conflict-prevention/conflict-resolution boundaries often represent a big challenge to mainstreaming. She also talked about the increasing need to be skilled in monitoring and evaluating, which is now receiving greater focus. *Transcript of her talk available by clicking on the link in the e-newsletter.*

Sharon Morris talked about the need for practitioners to learn both how to better define ourselves within our field, and how to define ourselves for those outside of it. She also emphasized the need to be more experimental and push the boundaries with regard to mainstreaming. Additionally, as monitoring and evaluating becomes the focus of greater and greater attention, Morris noted the increasing need to be skilled in these areas. *Transcript of her talk available by clicking on the link in the e-newsletter.*

Claire Sneed discussed the inter-conflict assessment framework that has been developed through cooperation between the State Department and the Department of Defense, the think-tank community and, especially, the U.S. Institute for Peace. This framework can assist in determining the needed action between a variety of sectors, whether it be justice or economic development, government structures, reconciliation or other essential services such as water, roads and schools, or practitioners in the field having skills that are not so much sectoral but rather are cross-cutting. *Transcript of her talk available by clicking on the link in the e-newsletter.*

Ambassador Ragnar Ängeby talked about his history in the field, and the importance of having a personal vision, as well as the need for a link between vision and reality. He discussed the work being undertaken by the Folke Benadotte Academy in Sweden and its training programs such as Conflict Prevention in Practice, and the Role of Economic Actors in Conflict Prevention and Peace Building. He also suggested that what is needed in this new profession is the application of a holistic approach – people who see the whole context – rather than too much specialization. *Transcript of his talk available by clicking on the link in the e-newsletter.*

Joelle Jenny talked about the work of Department for International Development, UK. DFID has new ministerial teams that have made conflict and fragile states one of the top four priorities for the department. They have just finished developing their competencies list for people working in the field of conflict. *See [Competencies Outline](#) by clicking on the link in the e-newsletter.* Joelle also discussed the critical need to avoid working in isolation, and emphasized building networks and finding your peers both inside and outside your organization as a support group. The exchange of learning as a best practice is key to maintaining our impact. *Transcript of her talk available by clicking on the link in the e-newsletter.*

Pamela Aall talked about the United States Institute for Peace's process of building a school for practitioners, the need for us all to work more effectively in conflict situations, and the importance of conflict analysis. A recent survey revealed that the most common knowledge/skill needs were identified in these four areas: a) understanding the context, b) understanding the culture, c) communicating and transferring knowledge, and d) being able to lead and manage in the fluid, ambiguous conflict or post-conflict environment. Being able to communicate with many different kinds of actors was also important, as was the ability to articulate what they are actually doing. She also talked about the importance of leadership and management skills in ensuring that the work is more effective. *Transcript of her talk available by clicking on the link in the e-newsletter.*

