



The Global Coalition for
Conflict Transformation

Tenth GCCT Newsletter - November 2014

Introduction

TransConflict (www.transconflict.com) is pleased to present the tenth bi-monthly Global Coalition for Conflict Transformation (GCCT) newsletter, which provides a host of insights into the work of the GCCT and its members. The main purpose of this newsletter is to a) share information about the work of the GCCT and its members to a wider audience, and b) to strengthen co-operation and co-ordination between GCCT members themselves and with other interested parties.

- [Click here to learn more about the GCCT](#)
- [Click here for a complete list of GCCT members](#)

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To contribute to the next edition of the GCCT newsletter – which will be published in mid-March 2015 – please contact TransConflict at - gcct@transconflict.com.

1) New members of the GCCT

The GCCT was pleased to welcome a host of new members in the past several months, including (click on the links below for further information):

1. [Somali Organization for Voluntary Action \(SOVA\)](#) - [Somalia \(Eastern Africa\)](#) - SOVA's Mission is to "protect the environment and improve the lives of disadvantaged and minority groups in South-Central Somalia through providing capacity building training and basic rights projects such as water, food, health, and education." SOVA conducts projects and programs relating to environment, humanitarian assistance and human rights for disadvantaged people such as women, children and minority groups in education, water, food, and health provision as well as creation of income-generating projects. SOVA will uphold the principles of conflict transformation by providing capacity-building training to local communities, particularly in three major zones of Somalia (Somaliland, Puntland and South-Central Somalia, including the Capital, Mogadishu). In addition, SOVA pursues the transformation of conflict through poverty alleviation programs for various local communities in Somalia, and actively contributes to negotiation processes of clan conflicts that relate to land issues and tribal wars.
2. [Terra-1530](#) - [Moldova \(Central and Eastern Europe\)](#) - Terra-1530's mission is to instruct and strengthen rural communities' capacity on sustainable development. Terra-1530 is working in an economically- and socially-disadvantaged region, focusing mainly on teenagers. Terra-1530 consider that youth has the power to change the situation. Terra-1530 is an umbrella-organization for 18 NGOs – 'Terra-HS', Association for Youth Promotion 'XXI Century', etc. Together with its partners, Terra-1530 has opened a Resource Center for youth from a rural, socio-economically disadvantaged region (Galesti village), the population of which had low or almost no access to information, particularly regarding to the Internet resources. Terra-1530 actions are particularly oriented towards upholding principle four, that "conflict transformation is a long-term, gradual and complex process, requiring sustained engagement and interaction."



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Global Coalition for Conflict Transformation \(GCCT\)**](#)

2) GCCT Members in Focus – Go Group Media from Georgia

Home to three unresolved conflicts, the South Caucasus represents a criss-cross of borders, real and perceived. According to Go Group Media, "governments here have indulged in flag-waving rhetoric, whipping-up – with connivance of the politically-engaged or professionally-deficient local media – nationalistic sentiment in their respective societies, and, what with people-to-people contacts across the conflict lines being scarce due to closed borders, self-serving bias and other-denigrating stereotypes have been rife."

Since being established in 2009, Go Group Media has built a large beneficiary base that spans much of the South Caucasus, including, uniquely, its disputed territories of Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh. To date, at least 300 ordinary citizens and journalists from around the region have joined in Go Group Media's work in a variety of capacities:

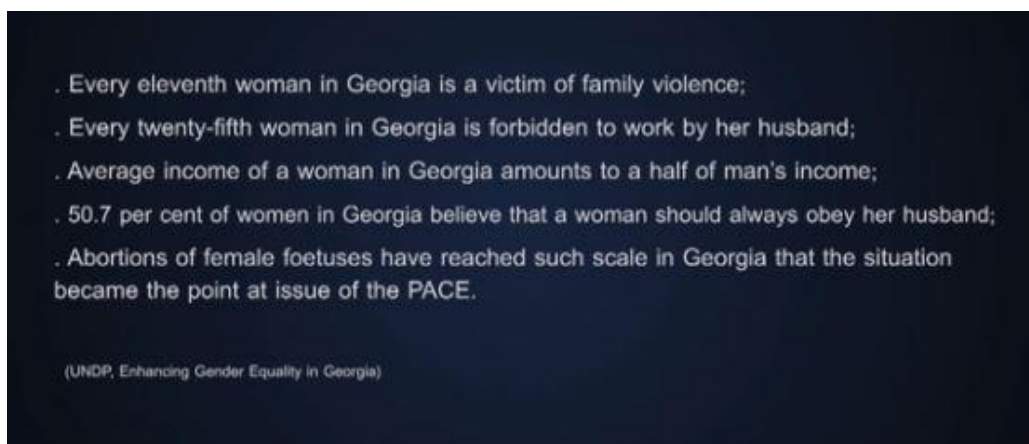
- 1) As contributors of its Eyewitness Studio, a cross-Caucasus network of ordinary people who have been producing, with Go Group Media's training guidance and professional editing input, short documentary films. The upwards of 300 doc stories they have come up with so far are intimate close-ups of their fellow citizens sharing their life experiences, and each of the stories is, effectively, a snapshot of a broader trend or problem shared by whole population segments. The issues the films have broached include minority discrimination, ethnic tensions, stale social customs, harmful gender stereotypes, lack of basic living necessities in remote countryside, etc.



- 2) As students of its Caucasus Authors Course (aka CAC School), a journalism skills enhancement program that has brought together tyro reporters from across the South Caucasus, including its three disputed territories, to expose them to a year-long real-cum-virtual learning agenda combining classes in documentary filmmaking, photo reporting and conflict analysis. The School has produced two batches of students so far (in 2012 and 2013, respectively) and is now going through a third round, attending to a new group of young Caucasian journalists.
- 3) As participants of its journalistic expeditions – arrangements taking groups of Caucasian media practitioners to different areas of the region and beyond to investigate and report important issues that have been mostly overlooked in the local media mainstream. (There

have been ten of these, including , including to the villages in Georgia's Shida Kartli region abutting on the disputed South Ossetia (looking into the daily struggles of people trapped in the conflict zone); to Samtskhe-Javakheti (investigating incidents of confrontation between Georgian Christians and Muslims, which some experts said might be signs of a growing Orthodox Christian fundamentalism in Georgia); and to Nagorno-Karabakh (sounding out the possibility of a new conflict outbreak there), etc.;

The media content resulting from all the three activities have been broadly circulated (through Go Group Media's website/social networking accounts, community screenings and syndication to a wide range of local media outlets), showing audiences region-wide that there is another reality behind the incomplete or distorted images imposed on them by their governments and media.



Go Group Media's track record also includes a number of professional quality full-length documentaries, including 'Generation of War' (probing young minds on both sides of the Georgian-Ossetian conflict), 'Girls Have Their Say' (exposing ugly gender patterns in Georgia), 'Georgia's Doukhobors: A Disappearing Breed' (about the country's diminishing community of Russian Christian dissenters).

Go Group Media's strong belief is that no formal political agreements can ever bring a lasting peace here unless these dangerous perceptions at the grassroots level change. And changing them is what it has striven to contribute to, through a host of cross-border initiatives that have, in the five years of its existence, directly benefited hundreds of ordinary Georgians, Abkhaz, Ossetians, Armenians and Azerbaijanis by bringing them to get to know one another while learning new skills and working collaboratively. Effectively, it has reared a network of multipliers of what is a conflict transformation sine qua non – tolerance for and constructive understanding of 'the other'.

[Please click here to learn more about Go Group Media from Georgia!](#)

3) GCCT Insight and Analysis

This section provides an overview of the insight and analysis produced and published by members of the GCCT on a variety of conflict and conflict transformation related topics (click on the links below to read the entire article):

1. [Pursuing reconciliation with armed opposition groups in Afghanistan](#) - by Maryam Safi - Though Afghanistan's new president, Dr. Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai, has already demonstrated the political will to pursue reconciliation with armed opposition groups, such as the Taliban and Hezb-e Islami, a clear strategy is required in order to secure a sustainable peace settlement.
2. [Mistakes were made](#) - by Gerard M. Gallucci - Global inequality – countries divided into “haves” and “have-nots” – leads to whole groups feeling that the “modern” world has no room for them. They become mobilizable for identity conflicts, where the identity may be anything that explains why “we” are left out.
3. [Breaking down barriers to peace between Israel and Palestine](#) - by Yitzhak Frankenthal - Those living in an ongoing conflict such as that between Israel and Palestine build emotional and psychological forms of self-defence that underpin its continuation and the reasons why it cannot be solved, thereby eliminating accountability for the conflict's ongoing existence. Faced with this problem, it is necessary to resort to a psychological approach known as ‘paradoxical thinking’.
4. [The criminal side of Ebola](#) - by Dr. Ian Ralby - The Health Crisis is only one effect of the Ebola outbreak. Long term effects on the region's ability to combat crime and provide safety and security for its citizens threaten to outlast the epidemic. International efforts to approach the outbreak should take an holistic approach at addressing the effect Ebola is having on organized crime in West Africa.
5. [Palestinian flags in Derry and Sarajevo – solidarity through representation](#) – by Dr. Ulas Doga Eralp – Victimhood is a powerful motivator of acts of solidarity. It is, therefore, more important than ever to understand and explain the role of symbols and slogans as political motivators in divided societies. Conflict transformation practitioners should not be scared of symbols, but rather of their interpretations.
6. [Jammu and Kashmir – a dotted line and a blotted history](#) – by Mazhar Iqbal – For Jammu and Kashmir, the Line of Control (LoC) is not only a symbol of state interference in social life, but also an emotional object representing the importance of cross-border alliances. In this sense, areas along the LoC represent a social structure where state-owned military paraphernalia is considered a symbol of authority, not protection.
7. [Iraq, Syria and the MidEast – what is to be done?](#) – by Gerard M. Gallucci – The essential fact of the sectarian conflicts (internal and external) that have characterized the MidEast for decades has been the artificial boundaries left behind by empire and the colonial powers. The basic question facing any political approach to restoring peace would be whether to seek to preserve those boundaries or draw new ones that would somehow recognize the ethnic and religious realities on the ground.

8. [Commemorating genocide – an important element of the politics of memory in Rwanda](#) - by Urszula Róg - Rwanda's ruling elites and society at large need to accept the existence of certain 'inconvenient' historical facts – such as the thousands of Hutu refugees killed at the hands of Rwandan troops in the eastern part of then Zaire – in order to create the collective memory which does justice to victims on all sides.
9. [On peacekeeping](#) – by Kirithi Jayakumar – An effective law is required to regulate peacekeeping missions; one that provides a standardized basis for the behaviour of peacekeepers, including issues such as the potential use of force and questions of impunity.
10. [What if the Islamic State wins?](#) - by Gerard M. Gallucci - If Islamic State cannot be defeated militarily, and if “degrading” it remains a distant and uncertain outcome, then everyone may have to accept that the IS will remain a factor and that the effort to build a Sunni state on the basis of Sharia must be allowed to play itself out. It seems ever more unlikely that the West can prevent this outcome through armed intervention in what is essentially a war within Islam to determine which century the people of the region decide to live in.
11. [ISIS – becoming armed, dangerous and a participant in mass violence](#) - by Chris Davey - Leaving aside financial support from more fundamentalist elements within the various Gulf states, three factors have assisted the fast-paced recruitment of such a large army; namely, the Syrian civil war, total and pervasive inequality in Iraq, and the general plight of Muslims in these areas.
12. [South Sudan – militarization inhibits popular representation](#) - by Kisuke Ndiku - With militarization inhibiting popular representation, there is a need to identify pillars of peace that that can be amplified to help transform communities away from cultures of revenge to cultures that embrace diversity and peace.
13. [Bosnia – the theory of dediscoursification and Dayton as a continuation of the state of war](#) - by Dražen Peħar - The theory of dediscoursification explains in detail what exactly happens when language fails; that is, when some political actors gradually come to a realization that, to their shared problems or political conflict, they are unlikely to find a joint solution in the medium of language.
14. [Bosnia – Izetbegović and implementation of the Dayton peace agreement](#) - by Dražen Peħar - Alija Izetbegović, a member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina until 2000, considered the post-Dayton peace agreement period as a frame that ought to be used as a tool to continue the war by verbal means, including both legal and diplomatic channels.
15. [Bosnia – the international community and Izetbegović's project of dediscoursification](#) - by Dražen Peħar - Bosnia and Herzegovina's politics in the post-Dayton period is to a large extent a politics of continuation of war by other means, and for such a continuation international actors are indeed chiefly responsible.

**[To contribute analysis and insight to TransConflict.com,](#)
[please contact us by clicking here!](#)**

4) GCCT Activities, Research and Requests

International Peace and Development Training Center (IPDTC) training courses

IPDTC provides experts, senior government leadership, professionals, policy makers and practitioners with the most advanced training and professional development opportunities in the field. From December 1st to 5th 2014, IPDTC will be hosting one of the world's leading trainings / professional workshops for agencies and organisations to improve programme strategy, design and implementation on Designing Peacebuilding Programmes. Special group rates for delegations are also available.

1) Designing Peacebuilding Programmes: Improving Sustainability, Impact and Effectiveness in Peacebuilding & Peace Support Operations (DPP), 1-5 December

Designing Peacebuilding Programmes is an in-depth operational training in program development, design, planning and implementation, drawing comprehensively on best-practice approaches from peacebuilding, development and humanitarian aid, and recovery, as well as methods and approaches for strategic planning and program and organizational development. Incorporating the work of the OECD-DAC and lessons learned and approaches from national and international agencies, the DPP provides organizations and participants with methods to significantly improve the quality, relevance, and impact of their programs. Most importantly: participants engage with their actual programs and operations and use the framework of Designing Peacebuilding Programmes to learn leading methodologies while improving actual work in practice.

Additional information

The programmes will be held at the Global Academy of IPDTC and are intended for senior to executive level experts and practitioners working in peacebuilding, crisis prevention and management and recovery and stabilization operations from governments, UN agencies and inter-governmental organisations (EU, OAS, AU, ASEAN, Commonwealth, OSCE) and national and international organisations.

IPDTC has an international pool of leading experts and practitioners covering a wide range of issues in peacebuilding, prevention, recovery and related issues. We work with requesting organizations, agencies, missions and ministries to customize programmes for your exact needs, context and conditions. For references on our training programmes, please see the Review and Feedback section of our site.

If you know organizations, agencies, ministries or individuals which you believe may benefit from these programmes, please share this announcement further with them or send them directly to IPDTC's web-site at www.patrir.ro/training or write to training@patrir.ro

[Please click here to learn more about PATRIR](#)

Empowering female entrepreneurs in Serbia and Kosovo

TransConflict Serbia and Democracy for Development (D4D) from Kosovo – with the support of the British Embassies in Belgrade and Pristina, respectively – organized a conference in Pristina entitled the ‘Empowering female entrepreneurs in the promotion of business opportunities between Serbia and Kosovo’, as part of an on-going project, ‘Creating a New Generation of Women Leaders in Serbia and Kosovo.’

On 30th September, a conference entitled the ‘Empowering female entrepreneurs in the promotion of business opportunities between Serbia and Kosovo’ took place in Pristina, gathering around 90 businesswomen from Serbia and Kosovo. Jointly organized by TransConflict Serbia and Democracy for Development (D4D), the conference was part of an on-going project, ‘Creating a New Generation of Women Leaders in Serbia and Kosovo’, aimed at creating ties of cooperation between Serbian and Kosovar businesswomen. The project is supported by the British Embassies in Belgrade and Pristina, respectively.

Having gathered a large number of women entrepreneurs from various professional sectors, the conference served as an opportunity to present the Forum of Business Women from Serbia and Kosovo, which has been established through a joint initiative of Serbian and Kosovar businesswomen. Though still an informal body, the Forum is gradually building in size and importance, and is already seen as an important contributor to the process of normalization of relations between Serbia and Kosovo.



The conference participants were greeted by His Excellency, Ian Cliff, the British Ambassador in Pristina, who emphasized the importance of Serbia -Kosovo dialogue and explained that the Embassies see this project as an extremely important component of the overall process. “We support this particular project as we believe that in order to bring greater stability, there is need for greater contacts between businesses and in particular connecting women businesses as they have greater role to play in building bridges between people”. Ambassador Cliff particularly thanked businesswomen from Serbia and Kosovo who have contributed to the establishment of the Forum for their openness and readiness to facilitate joint initiatives in the future. Ambassador Cliff concluded with the hope that these various forms of cooperation will contribute to economies of both countries and to the normalization of relations between ordinary people.

The conference also brought together official representatives of the Serbian and Kosovo Chambers of Commerce, respectively, who expressed their support to the Forum and

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acknowledged the importance of opening a new chapter in cooperation between Serbia and Kosovo – particularly in the sphere of economy and entrepreneurship. Both Chambers will work towards the removal of existing barriers, in order to create a more favourable business environment and incite more intensive business cooperation.



Other panelists included Ms. Teuta Sahatqija, an MP from Kosovo Parliament, who welcomed businesswomen from Serbia and Kosovo and praised them for their commitment and courage to organize mutual visits within Serbia and Kosovo, instead of choosing more ‘neutral’ places, as is often the case. Ms. Sahatqija urged women in businesses to continue their joint cooperation in the interest of overall economic development of Serbia and Kosovo, but also to advocate for harmonisation of legislations concerning businesses and facilitation of joint initiatives.

The conference participants also had the opportunity to hear presentations delivered by Serbian and Kosovar members of the Forum, and to meet successful businesswomen – Ambassadors of Women Entrepreneurship from Serbia – who presented their respective businesses and shared their professional experiences with their counterparts from Kosovo.

The conference concluded with an agreement between Serbian and Kosovar businesswomen to continue working towards strengthening of the Forum, so that it would become the solid bridge of cooperation between businesses from Serbia and Kosovo.



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5) GCCT Advocacy - Social media helps connect divided families in Kashmir

Compared to other confidence building measures, social media has played a vital role in bridging the divides created by the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir, helping overcome communication gaps and promoting the concept of a healing nation.

By Raja Wasim and Mazhar Iqbal

With globalization having reduced cultural differences and distances between countries, people across the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir are enforced to live in a heart-rending situation. Traditionally, they exchange smiles, wave to each other and read hidden messages of love and affection every day, but are not allowed to speak to those with whom they communicate. This is a unique form of communication. Old friends, neighbours and close relatives are bound to put a seal on their lips and not to interact with each other. Their faces speak volumes about their helplessness.

After over 60 years of forced partition, sadness and sorrow still dominates the atmosphere in Kashmir. Nonetheless, restrictions on common ways to communicate have not derailed people's resolution and commitment. A sizeable number of people in Jammu and Kashmir have lost contact with their loved ones in other parts of the divided state due to restrictions on internationally-accepted channels of communication and postal facilities.

The confidence building measures (CBMs) that were initiated a few years ago have, so far, proved to be a futile exercise. When initiated, it was a ray of hope for those wishing to travel across the border and meet with their relatives. The people on both sides had expectations of renewing contacts with their lost family members and relatives. Over the years, thousands have applied to travel via bus service, initiated under the CBMs, but due to complicated process involving several security checks, only a few among them had been successful in getting travel documents to travel.

The initiation of a bus service between two parts of the divided state was the first ever people-to-people contact in the beleaguered history of Kashmir conflict. Kashmiris who travelled across the LoC had found their relatives, friends and colleagues after a long passage of time and had expressed a hope to keep their contacts alive. There is no doubt that such CBMs have boosted contacts amongst divided families, particularly those who had migrated at different occasions after confrontations between the armies of two countries.

It is, however, worthwhile to note that the majority of people who were allowed to travel across the border in Jammu and Kashmir, belonged to almost all parts of the state.

Living a life in such an oppressive condition and keeping memories away is perhaps one of the hardest things one can struggle to do. When it is one's cherished hope to make contacts with somebody who is very close to their heart and finding no way to communicate, one cannot but stop thinking pessimistically. The dawn of internet era in Kashmir, however, has brought relief to peoples' lives. Now, they can see and talk to each other by using social media.

The people, who find it extremely difficult to make a phone call or speak to each other are now making contacts with their parents, siblings and other relations. Enjoying each other's video, sharing pictures and sending emails are a routine now. This communication revolution has come as a blessing for them to connect with their divided families.

A Kashmiri migrant, Farooq, who migrated in the nineties from Srinagar to Pakistan-Administered Kashmir, couldn't stop his tears when recounting his memories. "I saw my brother after 14 years. We both have spent all these years crying and desperately waiting to see each other. When my brother spoke to me after such a long time, he said, he had no other wish but to hug me once in his life."

Almost every individual with family living on the other side of the divided state now has regular contact. They are well aware of their circumstances and continue to making such contacts on a regular basis. Although people from both sides of the LoC need many other things to minimize their suffering, they are really benefiting from a social media boom. They are enjoying sharing the details of life; their personal moments of happiness and sorrow.

During the recent floods in Srinagar, Muzaffarabad-based people have been regularly following social media updates, including the latest pictures and videos from their loved ones who live in Indian Kashmir. In Pakistan-Administered Kashmir, where a weakened civil society is unable to play an effective role in nursing the conflict-affected people, social media has become a healer to connect them with each other. People are now better connected across the communities and are sharing information about their business, work and matters of routine.

Social media is bridging communication gaps and promoting the concept of a healing nation. Abdul Hakeem, a journalist, described that during the recent floods in Srinagar he has been in touch with many of his friends in Indian Kashmir. There are many combined groups of youth and students who are working without any proper initiative to share meaningful things. On Facebook we regularly receive requests from people who migrated from Muzaffarabad in 1947 requesting information about their birthplace.

There are several pages dedicated to Kashmir affairs on social media platforms from both sides, highlighting social, cultural, political and economic activities. People are now enjoying opportunities to make new friends through social media. As compared to other CBMs in Jammu and Kashmir, social media is playing a vital role in the backdrop of a conflict situation and it needs to be recognized.

Raja Wasim is Director of Press For Peace (PFP), a rights advocacy organisation working in Jammu and Kashmir. Mazhar Iqbal is a peace and human rights activist and member of Press for Peace.

[Please click here to learn more about Press for Peace from Kashmir!](#)

6) Follow the GCCT and the TransConflict

To follow the GCCT, please click on one of the following buttons:



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[Click here to add your name to TransConflict's e-Declaration in support of the principles of conflict transformation!](#)

