

MEDIA AND PEACEBUILDING

A Roundtable Consultation

Held in Vancouver, BC
April 8-9, 1999

Summary Notes

This document was compiled from detailed notes taken during the roundtable consultation on Media and Peace-building held in Vancouver on the 9th April 1999.

The notes reflect contributions to the discussion made by all the participants in the meeting (see participants list).

Because peace interventions differ in character from situation to situation, and because of the diverse experience of the group, the discussion was wide ranging. I have attempted to group the many points which were made at various stages of the discussion throughout the day under broad headings.

It was generally accepted that the role that the media can play depends on the type of peace-building intervention envisaged.

Much of the discussion took place in the context of participants' experiences of supporting the emergence of a democratic media infrastructure in the context of actual peace-building interventions in countries where a transition from war-torn society to fledgling democracy was imminent or already underway. In these 'Transition to Democracy' cases, the discussion focused on the journalism component of the media.

Other participants' contributions stemmed from their experience of using the media self-consciously as a messenger and promoter of peace (some referred to this approach as "propaganda for peace"). This approach involves "beaming in" direct messages from the outside, as well as using local or externally developed media in innovative ways to address the sources of conflict (cultural attitudes, belief systems). In what I shall term 'Messenger for Peace' interventions, a wide range of media is used, and cultural and dramatic components of the media (eg. soap opera) received more attention.

1. The Role of the Media in a Peace-building Intervention

1.1 Media's Role in Supporting a Transition to Democracy.

We have to ask the question: exactly what role do we want media to play in this intervention?

There exists a tension between our view of good media as being objective and our knowledge that good media has an objective.