

The number of internationally recognized non-governmental organizations (NGOs) has proliferated and now stands at well over 3,000.¹ These NGOs play a vital role in many areas, including, peacebuilding. The intention of this paper is not to debate whether NGOs should play an active role in peacebuilding initiatives as their presence is almost guaranteed and is often called for by governments.² Therefore, the purpose of this paper will be to outline and critically discuss a strategy for international NGOs to follow in regard to peacebuilding. Ultimately, this paper examines what might be discussed under the rubric a long and short-term strategy: the first strategy entailing a progressionary deployment of NGOs according to their mandate and the latter encompassing the involvement of civil society and the development of an organization to oversee NGO activity.³ Understanding the purpose of this paper, it should be noted that this discussion is not meant to be normative in nature; rather, it is meant to simply acknowledge the positive and negative aspects of a possible peacebuilding strategy. However, before discussing such a strategy, it is useful to briefly examine the concept of peacebuilding and the need for an integrated approach.

Peacebuilding: The Need for an Integrated Approach

International NGOs, governmental organizations and intergovernmental organizations have been involved with many peacebuilding initiatives. However, the strategy of such organizations often appear to be purely improvised. Actors are frequently selective about the situations in which they involve themselves: "external support for post-conflict recovery remains a voluntary and essentially ad hoc enterprise."⁴ This means that some situations receive a great deal of attention while others receive very little. Furthermore, those countries that do become the focus of the international community, such as Bosnia or Kosovo, often experience a sudden influx of various 'humanitarian' workers. While the intentions of such workers may be good,

¹David Lewis, "Development NGOs and the Challenge of Partnership: Changing Relations Between North and South," *Social Policy and Administration*, V32, 1998. Pg. 501

²In his speech to the United Nations, Llyod Axworthy calls for cooperation with NGOs in peacebuilding efforts. He states that they are vital to peacebuilding efforts on "two counts: (1) because we find ourselves operating where security is acute, and (2) because we are engaged in delivering services on which security depends." NGOs are also thought to be fundamental as they "bring significant financial resources, skills, understanding and political commitment to the international community's collective peacebuilding enterprise." (*Canada and Peacebuilding - Government/ NGO Consultations*.
http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/peacebuilding/gngo_report-e.asp).

³The strategy being discussed here, particularly in relation to short-term initiatives, is very loosely based on the document outlining patterns of peacebuilding and the role of the Canadian government. See *Canada and Peacebuilding*: http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/peacebuilding/pes_patterns-e.asp.

⁴Shepard Forman, Stewart Patrick and Dirk Salomons, *Recovering from Conflict: Strategy for and International Response*, (New York: Center on International Cooperation, New York University). Pg. 17