

peaceful relationships. The term thus involved a wide range of activities and function that both precede and follow formal peace accords."<sup>7</sup> Barbara Shenstone of *Care Canada* has also noted:

Peace efforts since 1995 have recognized that peace is built from the bottom up as well as from the top down - by addressing the individual and human dimension - real people's needs, feelings, and aspirations - and not only focusing on formal structures, national institutions, or power elites. Some approaches now emphasize the psychological, spiritual, and relational dimensions of war and peace. They attempt to address the emotive and attitudinal effects of war - dissolved hatred, suspicion, fear, anger, and hostility.<sup>8</sup>

Herein lies the opportunity and responsibility of civil society in peacebuilding. NGOs are able to complement and often improve, traditional state-centric methods of humanitarian relief and development.

The promise that NGOs offer as peacebuilders has led some observers to note:

The great strengths of NGOs - flexibility, speed of reaction, comparative lack of bureaucracy, operational and implementation capacity commitment and dedication of the usually young staff - are particular advantages in emergency work. In addition, the political independence of the NGOs, not bound by the rules of the UN Charter, gives them a strong comparative advantage in increasingly complex internal conflicts.<sup>9</sup>

As conflict is frequently of a transborder nature, NGOs present a particular ability to overcome the natural tendency of states and institutions to respect sovereign borders. Moreover, it is well documented that NGOs possess other comparative advantages, such as: the strength to respond quickly to crisis situations; an ability to reach the poorest and most remote areas; a capacity to promote local participation and to implement programmes in direct collaboration with target beneficiary groups; a means to operate on low costs; a aptitude to strengthen local institutions; and the empowerment of marginal groups.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> John Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997), p. 29.

<sup>8</sup> Barbara Shenstone, "Civilian Roles in Peace Support Operations," Third Annual DFAIT-NGO Peacebuilding Consultations, [www.cpcc.ottawa.on.ca/civilians.htm](http://www.cpcc.ottawa.on.ca/civilians.htm)

<sup>9</sup> Martin Griffiths, Iain Levine and Mark Weller, "Sovereignty and Suffering," in John Harris (ed.), *The Politics of Humanitarian Intervention*, London: Pinter Publishers, 1995, p. 72.

<sup>10</sup> Francis Kofi Abiew and Tom Keating, "NGOs and UN Peacekeeping Operations: Strange Bedfellows," *International Peacekeeping* (Summer, 1999), pp. 93-5.