

TRAINING LEADERS FOR PEACE

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democracy are attainable only when the underlying social and political inequities are corrected. Yet the resolution of these inequities becomes virtually impossible if there is no recognition of interdependence and common interests. Democratic nation-building is not simply a matter of persuading political leaders to subordinate their parochial interests to those of the nation. Real transformation requires not greater altruism from leaders and citizens, but rather a new recognition that their self-interest can be more effectively advanced through collaboration and inclusive political processes.

Second, while grassroots reconciliation efforts were plentiful, the Tutsi, Hutu, and Twa leaderships were still at odds with one another, and this had to change. Somehow, a means had to be identified to restore trust among key leaders and to rebuild their personal relationships so that peace might be sustained.

Third, Burundian leaders had to restore a firm consensus on the ground rules for sharing state power and making public decisions. Seriously compounding this challenge was the continued presence in the field of armed groups.

Fourth and finally, war had seemingly robbed Burundian elites of their communication and negotiating skills. Leaders needed to learn or relearn how to hear others' concerns and how to express their own in ways that would encourage a search for solutions rather than endless blame-throwing. Democracy and stability cannot thrive in a climate of constant accusations and demands.

The BLTP began with these four crucial goals in mind.¹ After months of consultations with a broad cross-section of heads of institutions and organizations, a strategically selected and ethnically diverse group of 95 key Burundian leaders was invited to take part in an 18-month-long capacity-building initiative. The objective was to build a cohesive, sustainable network of leaders who could work together across all ethnic and political divides in order to advance Burundi's reconstruction. BLTP workshops would feature training in interest-based negotiations, communications, mediation, conflict analysis, strategic planning, and the management of organizational change.

Because of the project's intention to address simultaneously both the ethnic divide within the political elite and the wide gulf between the country's political class and the mass of the population, the BLTP participants were drawn in almost equal measure from the political class (the political parties, the army, and the rebel groups) and civil society (churches, women's organizations, academia, the media, business, and youth). In testimony to Burundians' deep yearning for a better future, the leaders of virtually all social and institutional sectors embraced the initiative. Even the National Liberation Front (FNL), the one armed group still outside the peace process, said that it welcomed the BLTP and hoped to join it once security conditions permitted.

In March 2003, the inaugural workshop in the “Ngozi process” (named after the town in northern Burundi that was the BLTP’s initial training venue) went forward for the benefit of the first 35 members of the prospective BLTP leadership network. Participants understood that this was to be not a one-off event but rather part of a process of leadership development and networking that would bring the participants together every two or three months for exercises meant to broaden their leadership skills and deepen their personal relationships. Over time, three groups of participating leaders would merge into a single leadership network.

The “Ngozi process” employs a variety of simulations and other interactive exercises to help transform the way in which participants define their self-interest, so that they can see their long-term security and welfare as being not in opposition to, but directly dependent upon, the larger collectivity of which they are part. This requires understanding the concept of “interest-based negotiations,” in which decision makers distinguish between their “positions” or idealized aspirations, on the one hand, and their underlying “interests” or fundamental needs, on the other. Sustainable decisions are far more likely to result from a decision-making process that turns not on attempts to impose one’s position on others but, instead, on the search for means of accommodating the priority interests of all.

Another principal training objective is to form a climate of mutual trust. This is because sustainable agreements among competing parties require not only a sense of shared interests but also a set of working human relationships. This means seeing each other as individuals and not merely as members of hostile groups, and learning truly to “hear” the other’s point of view and stand in the other’s shoes.

Effective communication is a major focus. Participants learn the role that communication plays in developing or destroying trust (that messages can be meant in one way and received in another), the danger of acting on the basis of untested assumptions, and the ways in which the method of decision-making and the distribution of resources can affect intergroup attitudes. A powerful lesson emerging from simulations to which the leaders are exposed is that durable solutions to issues driving conflict can only be found through inclusive, participant-based processes—that is, through means that are essentially those of democracy.

Extending the Ngozi Process

Within six months, the Ngozi process had had such a remarkable impact on the cohesion and collaborative capacity of the leaders involved that the BLTP participants from the Tutsi army high command and from the six armed rebel groups joined in asking that a workshop be quickly organized for army and rebel military commanders to prepare for the upcoming cease-fire. In the event, 20 armed-group commanders

and 17 army officers traveled—in some cases straight from the battlefield—to Nairobi for a six-day workshop. Breaking the ice took extra effort, yet by week's end the combatants had established the same kind

Council of Ministers, and the various chiefs of staff of the executive leadership. The president has asked that this training be continued for the top tier of government and be extended to parliamentary leaders.

According to both those who observed and those who took part, the BLTP has had remarkable success in breaking down ethnic and political barriers, in building social cohesion among training participants, in strengthening collaborative capacities, and in boosting institutional transformation. Nearly four hundred national leaders from the military, the police, civilian government, civil society, and the parties have so far received some form of Ngozi-process training, as have over four thousand local leaders. The members of the original “network of 95” continue to meet and work together, to socialize, and to collaborate on a number of projects and activities. They have begun to apply the lessons that they have learned—and the potent example of their own

and resiliency that Western democracies derive not only from pluralism and competition, but also from an underlying agreement on the definition of the national community, an acceptance by key components of the society of the “rules of the game,” and the existence of a modicum of trust among prominent leaders. Even “adversarial” Western democracy, in short, depends as much upon cooperation as it does upon competition; it rests not only on the jostling of diverse interests, but also on the recognition of the common ground upon which all members of the national community stand.

By contrast, many culturally plural states today have an uncertain concept of nationhood. Contemporary African national identities and institutions, for example, are for the most part colonial impositions. While there may be a nominal acceptance of a common “national” identity, members of different ethnic groups often see each other as hostile, alien entities with fundamentally opposed interests. Given the dire poverty and underdevelopment that grip most African societies, Burundi included, the state is often seen as the most certain avenue to wealth and power, and politics becomes a desperate high-stakes affair. A sense of communal interdependence and trust among group leaders are often notable by their absence.

The problem of African democratization does not primarily lie in the absence of democratic values. Many African societies have traditionally embraced ways of making decisions that call for broad participation and strive for consensus. Rather, the problem is that members of many culturally plural African nation-states simply do not define themselves as “citizens first.” Even in states that once had unifying identities and institutions—such as the traditional monarchies of Rwanda and Burundi—the new modes and orders of colonialism and postcolonialism engendered new patterns of political mobilization and competition that shattered traditional bonds.

Against this backdrop of weak national identities and institutions, a stress on competitive, adversarial politics can well be counterproductive. While there remains a role for “conventional” democracy-promotion programs that encourage multipartism, human rights in shoranda andn which all meed new patterns of p462arial p leaders are oft.0984and the’s

multiparty electoral competition, a separation of powers, the rule of law, and the like. But institutions must draw in individuals if the institutions are to have any real force. And institutional transformation requires individual transformation—in the way people think, in how they relate to