

State Department Goals Supported by Peacebuilding

In 2010, the Department of State and USAID undertook the Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR) to assess how they could become “more efficient, accountable, and effective” in the 21st century.ⁱ The crux of the assessment rests on promoting “civilian power” to achieve these goals. Civilian power embodies a range of actors, from diplomats to civil society groups around the world. Peacebuilding groups have distinctive roles to play in this context. Independent of government, NGOs engaged in peacebuilding and mediation are uniquely positioned to respond to complex conflicts around the world promoting conflict prevention and resolution while also supporting the QDDR’s goals of efficiency and effectiveness.

Peacebuilding groups have a long history of playing supporting roles to help end conflicts around the world. They are often able to bring parties into dialogue when the U.S. government is unable to so. These groups also are able to utilize their on-the-ground knowledge and relationships to understand the drivers of a conflict and to support local processes. In an era of budget cuts, peacebuilding groups, which are often privately funded, take pressure off of the U.S. government trying to mitigate and end violent conflicts around the world.

The following is a sample of goals expressed by the QDDR and State Department strategies, and how peacebuilding groups, operating independently, can help to achieve those goals.

State Department Goals	How Peacebuilding Groups Can Help
<p><i>Efficiency and Effectiveness</i></p> <p>“A central aim of the QDDR is to determine how to use our resources most efficiently in a time of tight budgets.”</p> <p>“...investments in civilian capacity today can head off much costlier military or humanitarian interventions down the road.”ⁱⁱ</p> <p>“The United States cannot do all things, do them well, and do them everywhere.”ⁱⁱⁱ</p>	<p>Peacebuilding groups are private nonprofits run and staffed by experts in conflict resolution and mediation. They routinely partner with civil society groups and individuals in the field to address the root causes of conflict, and support local actors and local processes of conflict resolution that enjoy legitimacy. This work offers value for money, supporting U.S. goals of preventing costly, military interventions in the future.</p>
<p><i>Whole of Society Solutions</i></p> <p>“Civil society....can often work in areas or in a manner that a government simply cannot”^{iv}</p> <p>“NGOs...possess expertise and operational capacity.”^v</p> <p>“...civilian agencies and private groups of all kinds are increasingly able to deploy resources on the ground in countries around the world.”^{vi}</p>	<p>Because peacebuilding groups are independent from the government, they are often able to operate in unofficial and less constrained political space. Peacebuilders leverage this independence to help bring <i>all</i> parties into dialogue and negotiation processes. In every peace process around the world (including Ireland, Israel and Palestine, and South Africa), peacebuilders have played vital roles at different stages. They can offer a "back channel" for discussions with all parties to conflict, and can help develop creative solutions outside the spotlight of official action.</p>

<p><i>Countering Terror and Violent Extremism</i></p> <p>“...one of the long-term solutions to terrorism is building up civil society...”^{vii}</p> <p>“Countering violent extremism will... require effective communication with global publics and potential extremists”^{viii}</p>	<p>Peacebuilding groups can take many different approaches to help end and mitigate terrorism. These range from training armed groups to respect International Humanitarian Law principles, to empowering women and girls in local civil society organizations in their tactics of resilience and protection. The diversity of the peacebuilding sector allows these organizations to play a multiplicity of complementary roles – more often than not in partnership with local intermediaries.</p>
<p><i>Advancing Democracy and Human Rights</i></p> <p>“[CSOs] mobilize populations within and across states to promote growth, fundamental human values, and effective democratic government”^{ix}</p> <p>USAID will create, “tools to support the human rights movement; working with local partners to make fragile democracies more responsive to their citizens; and creating, together with the broader donor community, new strategies to advance sound governance.”^x</p>	<p>Many peacebuilding groups recognize that advancing legitimate, capable and responsive governance is an important dimension of lasting peace. They often work with partners on the ground to help bolster local civil society groups with a shared agenda. Some groups also actively train and influence (armed) non-state opposition groups and their constituencies to better respect human rights during conflict and better understand their options to move out of violence and into politics. By offering such groups opportunities to learn about international human rights and humanitarian law as well as deepening their understanding of negotiation and peace processes, peacebuilders can help mitigate human rights abuses during armed conflict.</p>

In February 2011, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton launched the Strategic Dialogue with Civil Society. The goal of this dialogue was to create a “forum for cooperation with civil society and a vehicle for telling the story of our ongoing work to support and protect the freedoms of association and expression.” As outlined above, the avenues for cooperation between State and civil society groups—in particular, peacebuilders—are numerous. Working together towards common goals will ensure efficiency, efficacy and will increase the chances of creating meaningful and lasting peace.

ⁱ US Department of State, *The Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review: Fact Sheet* (Washington, D.C., 2010), accessed June 19, 2013, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/153109.pdf>.

ⁱⁱ US Department of State, *The Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review* (Washington, D.C., 2010), 124.

ⁱⁱⁱ “Fact Sheet: U.S. Global Development Policy,” last modified September 22, 2010, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/09/22/fact-sheet-us-global-development-policy>.

^{iv} Department of State, QDDR, 14.

^v *Ibid.*, 121.

^{vi} *Ibid.*, 4.

^{vii} Hillary Rodham Clinton, “Strategic Dialogue with Civil Society Summit,” May 16, 2012.

^{viii} Department of State, QDDR, 62.

^{ix} *Ibid.*, 14.

^x *Ibid.*, 90.