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*FROM CIVIL WAR  
TO CIVIL SOCIETY*

THE TRANSITION FROM WAR TO PEACE  
IN GUATEMALA AND LIBERIA

THE WORLD BANK AND THE CARTER CENTER

# Background

## The Liberian Civil War

**F**reed American slaves began to settle what is currently known as Liberia in the 1820s, often in the face of hostility from the local inhabitants. By 1847, the ex-slaves and their descendants had declared a republic and began a 150 year period of Americo-Liberian elite rule based on domination and exploitation of the indigenous population. In 1980, Americo-Liberian rule ended with a military coup staged by Samuel Doe. The ensuing regime, violently suppressed any form of opposition for the next ten years, creating deadly ethnic cleavages.

In late 1989, the National Patriotic Front for Liberia (NPFL), under the leadership of Charles Taylor, began a rebellion in the north. When it reached the capital, Monrovia, during the summer of 1990, the NPFL was repelled by an Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) peacekeeping force (ECOMOG). Shortly after, President Doe was killed by a splinter faction of the NPFL and a Liberian National Transitional Government (LNTG) under the leadership of Amos Sawyer was installed.

Major peace talks—started the subse-

## *From Civil War to Civil Society*

on Guatemalan territory. The revolt failed but the officers disappeared into the rural areas, formed a guerrilla army, and began a war against the government.

Initially, the movement was aligned with Cuban revolutionary forces and concentrated in the Ladino areas of the country. However, over the next two decades, political and social reforms became a rallying point, with the indigenous populations playing a major role. The government counter-insurgency campaign, characterized by large-scale human rights violations, successfully restrained the guerrilla movement. Yet, the struggle continued, partly due to the strength of guerrilla movements in neighboring countries. In 1982, the groups united into the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG).

The transition to peace began in the early to mid-1980s with a new constitution, the election of a civilian president, political pluralism, and personal liberties such as freedom of speech. In 1987, the Guatemalan president, in concert with other Central American heads of state, signed a declaration outlining procedures for the establishment of sustainable peace in the region. For Guatemala, an important component of this agreement was the establishment of National Reconciliation Commissions (NRC).

The next three years were spent preparing for the negotiations. This process included a series of NRC consultations with political parties, the private sector, religious groups, academics, labor unions, and other members of civil society. These meetings were mediated by the Catholic Church and a UN observer. In 1991, formal discussions began between the URNG and the newly formed government commission for peace (COPAZ).

Three years later, civil society was explicitly brought into the negotiations with the establishment of a Civil Society Assembly. The ensuing agreement—bringing together accords on democratization, human rights, displaced populations, indigenous rights, socioeconomic issues, and the role of civil society and the military—took almost six years to reach and was signed in December 1996.

### **From civil war to civil society**

Though the transition from war to sustainable peace is multifaceted and non-linear, we can distinguish the three overlapping phases of making peace, keeping peace and sustaining peace, with each phase requiring a mix of political, security, humanitarian and developmental activities. Yet, it is difficult to determine which set of activities will achieve its objectives in a given situation. Moreover, the appropriate timing of and the interaction between the various interventions is not well understood. The international community is working within a multi-disciplinary and inexact science.

The following report has four main sections: the three overlapping phases of war to peace transition and a brief conclusion. The first section, making peace, discusses the peace process, including the role of civil society and the international community. The second section, keeping peace, addresses post-conflict governance, elections and issues related to implementing the peace accords. The third section, sustaining peace, explores reconstruction and reconciliation. The final section concludes by emphasizing the need for an integrated strategic framework—a coherent approach to sustainable peace.

## The peace process

The essential element of a peace process is *political willingness* by all warring factions to enter into negotiations and a *security framework* to maintain the peace. This usually requires extensive investments in time and money before the parties are brought to the negotiating table. In particular, the various parties must overcome the lack of interpersonal trust that has developed during the conflict. Another important component is the need for all involved to view the negotiations as a “way out” of the conflict where not all demands will be met. As conflict results from differing societal perceptions, even the best peace process will result in a compromise.

However, to minimize discontent, maintain momentum and reach the “largest common denominator,” the process needs to be comprehensive, transparent, and inclusive. This means that all social, economic and political aspects of the conflict should be addressed in an open forum, allowing all interested members of the society an equal opportunity to participate. Throughout the process, no

The nature of war determines the nature of peace

*system of risks and rewards* should encourage peaceful pursuit of livelihoods, rather than intimidation, violence and rent-seeking; fourth, *adversaries* must come to view each other as members of the same society, working toward a common goal—a peaceful and prosperous future; and fifth, *structures and institutions* must be amended at all levels of the society to support these new peaceful transformations.

Participants also noted that the “nature of war determines the nature of peace.” This means that the factors which produce and sustain the conflict will directly impact the ensuing peace settlement.

The Guatemalan peace process offers many lessons: first, transparent processes increased trust and reduced suspicion; second, participation by most of the stakeholders built a sense of partnership among the various components of society, legitimizing the process and outcome; and third, the agreements addressed the root causes of the conflict, providing a blueprint for socioeconomic development. In this manner, the agreements went beyond addressing military arrangements to provide a comprehensive package for a new nation. Participants stressed that the peace was brokered by the Guatemalans themselves, not imposed by outsiders.

The role of civil society

Civil society can play an important role during the peace process by: (a) ensuring that discussions and recommendations take into account the needs of the larger society, and (b) monitoring the implementation of these very recommendations. In this manner, the agreements become an

exercise in *national* conflict resolution and reconstruction. As already noted, civil participation legitimizes the peace process and outcome.

However, participation by civil society requires that the factions open the process to all interested members of society, that institutional mechanisms are in place to guarantee civil participation, and that resources are available to support local peace-building and conflict management efforts. A workshop participant described this as “inclusiveness in meaningful institutions.” This process may be very difficult in a highly militarized society.

Involving civil society in the peace process can contribute to psychosocial healing. Civil society—the network of informal and formal relationships, groups and organizations which bind a society together—can provide the environment within which the levels of trust and sense of community necessary for durable peace are constructed. By allowing civil society to

Involving civil society in the peace process can contribute to psychosocial healing

participate in the peace settlement, reconciliation becomes part of the peace-making process itself.

The displacement and destruction associated with conflict usually has an adverse effect on civil society. Yet, some aspects of civil society usually survive and can be built on. This is the case, even in Liberia, where civilians were targeted by the





## Post-conflict governance

In the final analysis, two important elements of successful peace accords are active involvement by civil society and skillful governance. With the state apparatus and civil society both weakened by conflict, good governance — the management of resources on behalf of all citizens with fairness and openness — is an important goal. Successful governance, in this and other contexts, has several key features:

*Transparency*, which requires budget, debt, expenditure, and revenue disclosure. Who pays and who benefits must be apparent to all.

*Accountability*, which means that the governing body will be responsible for how it is generating revenue and allocating expenditure.

*Rule of law*, which demands a legal framework by which government and society conduct themselves.

*Institutional pluralism* rather than unitary structures, which supports the forgoing conditions.

*Participation*, which implies the involvement and empowerment of all those affected by governance.

Participants suggested that the following considerations might ease the burden on post-conflict governing bodies and facilitate good governance. To the extent possible, authority should be decentralized to increase the participation of civil society. Community-centered development and increasing capacity at the local level may produce quick impact and sustainability. Decentralization may also avoid a “winner takes all” scenario. Another important consideration is that the relatively weak administrative capacity of the government means that it should concentrate on a few priorities. A small number of targets should be set and pursued with vigor. Overly

ambitious programs may produce public dissatisfaction and loss of faith in the process. Moreover, while establishing a macroeconomic framework may be necessary to reduce inflation and stabilize the economy, regulatory and administrative procedures should be kept to a minimum. Incentives for good behavior, however, need to be included early on.

Participants also emphasized that good governance does not always require political democracy. Unelected regimes can manage public resources openly and fairly, while democratically elected gov-

ernments can be corrupt and incompetent. Such distinctions have important implications for societies emerging from conflict. While ill-advised to follow political blueprints, such societies should seek to establish the institutional basis for a move toward democracy.

## In search of a representative government

Although democracy may not always coincide with good governance, popular participation in decision-making does encourage transparency and accountability. These are two key features of good governance, and in the long term, good governance is correlated with socioeconomic





fighting is one stop on the long road toward improving the living standards of society.

- *Meeting expectations.* In order to achieve consensus among warring factions and other groups with competing agendas, peace accords often offer a wish list, ignoring resource constraints. Translating political discourse into concrete actions will require a more realistic approach and timetable.
- *Restructuring the wartime economy.* Conflict societies undergo fundamental economic changes, which may take years to reverse. The implementation of peace accords can restore confidence and promote the return of private capital. Legitimate activities must replace the exploitation of resources that sustains the warring factions.
- *Targeting high-payoff interventions.* Given the weak economic base that characterizes most post-conflict societies, targeted interventions with immediate impact are essential. Access to land and alternative sources of income, and support for civil society and women's groups, inter alia, should be considered.
- *Neutralizing private violence.* The instability caused by the transition period coupled with sluggish implementation of the peace accord often leads to an increase in crime rates. Reductive measures in this area need to include "carrots" (counseling, training and employment generation programs for vulnerable groups, especially ex-combatants) and "sticks" (a civilian security force and justice system).

#### HUMAN AND INDIGENOUS RIGHTS

Neglected during conflict, human rights protection and promotion are crucial in war to peace transitions. To begin the process, human rights could be incorporated in peace accords, including protection for indigenous identity and rights where necessary. The Guatemalan accords were very successful in this area. If human rights monitors are deemed necessary during the transition process, their role should be clearly defined.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights recognizes five roles for human rights monitors: (a) dissuasive presence in the rural area, (b) human rights verification and monitoring, (c) strengthening and training the justice system, i.e., civilian police, prisons, judges and courts, (d) facilitating the return of internally displaced populations (IDPs) and refugees, and (e) human rights promotion, institutional development and support for civil society.

Participants suggested the following measures to improve a country's human rights situation, increase social cohesion and prevent the escalation of ethnic tensions: (a) drawing on revered intermediaries (teachers, lawyers, etc.) from different groups, (b) promoting economic autonomy at the group and, where possible, individual level, (c) providing a predictable degree of rule of law, (d) ensuring absorptive capacity in the economy to encourage private investment, and (e) encouraging ethnic identity and heritage development, including reconstruction of historic and religious sites. All members of society, including the different ethnic groups and factions, should participate economically, socially and politically.

Participants stressed that achieving a lasting peace requires time and patience. The impact of war is profound and resentments run deep. It usually takes years for the economy to take off and generations for the wounds to heal. Achieving the peace dividend is even

more challenging for poor, multi-ethnic states. Involving civil society in the process is one way of buying *social patience and consensus*, sharing the burden of waiting and ensuring that everyone receives a bit of the pie as it becomes available. In Guatemala, for example, a national consensus has emerged that taxes need to be raised to pay for the reconstruction effort.

## Post-conflict economic management

Peace also requires a wide range of confidence-building measures (e.g., job creation, training for ex-combatants, road rehabilitation) in the area of economic management. Otherwise, as one participant noted, the society will begin to wonder: what is peace for, if not improved living standards?

Catalyzing the private sector is an important part of this confidence-building. This requires the reduction of three key constraints: lack of business confidence, lack of capital, and lack of infrastructure. Reducing uncertainty and boosting business confidence is a precondition for transforming the private sector into an engine of growth for the economy, permitting the flow of capital necessary for reconstruction. The removal of this constraint will catalyze the removal of the other two. Decreasing uncertainty requires: (a) reestablishing political authority and direction; (b) increasing security, i.e., demobilization, police and military reform; (c) providing a stable macroeconomic framework; and (d) establishing a transparent legal and regulatory environment. Yet, support for demobilization and police reform are often underfunded or not addressed up-front; and the process of stabilizing the economy (controlling inflation, consolidating fiscal management, improving the tax system, establishing a customs agency, setting up a legal framework, and normalizing financial intermediation) requires considerable effort, commitment, and capacity. Without political direction, authority and security, i.e., an enabling environment, the private sector will not rise to the challenge.

An enabling environment is also important in the context of a Marshall Plan-like



characteristics, needs and aspirations. Reinsertion and reintegration opportunities should then be provided in the form of transitional safety nets and programs promoting sustainable livelihoods.

### Assistance to other war-affected populations

The other main categories of war-affected populations include refugees, IDPs and those who stayed. The third group often suffers equal hardship but is frequently overlooked in post-conflict reconstruction efforts. These groups, like the ex-combatants, have special needs that must be addressed with well-designed programs. For example, a participant noted that the return of displaced persons should ensure their safety and dignity, and they should be provided legal documentation.

Reintegration programs for all war-affected groups should concentrate on addressing basic needs, i.e., food, health

care, shelter, and building morale. Also, where possible, people should be empowered to meet their own needs, especially in the area of employment. However, providing basic primary education for all, training and large-scale employment will stretch an administratively weak transitional government. Experience in Latin America has shown that land reform and possibly access to credit can also be

important for long-term reintegration, especially for the transitional poor.

An important subgroup within all of these groups is women. As single heads of households, they have unique socioeconomic needs; and as victims of sexual violence, they require particular attention during the reconciliation processes, especially since most of them will not disclose such information due to shame and fear of rejection.

### From emergency to development assistance

As a society makes the transition from war to peace, the role of the international community changes from saving lives to sustaining livelihoods, from relief- to development-oriented activities. Sustaining livelihoods after a period of prolonged violence requires (a) rebuilding social, economic and political infrastructure, and (b) providing credible economic alternatives to avoid further conflict. In this context, the international community needs to consider the following set of issues to ensure successful reconstruction and sustainable socioeconomic development.

**PLANNING.** Preparation is crucial to the success of any reconstruction program. Often this process can begin before an official cease-fire is in place.

**CONTINUITY.** Building on the experience gained during the emergency phase, e.g., the secondment of relief staff, is important for informing reconstruction planning and implementation.

COORDINATION. Often the further duplication of crucial information is critical to the success of reconstruction efforts.

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# Toward an Integrated Strategic Framework

**A** theme that emerged repeatedly during the workshop was that the transition from war to peace is a highly complex process, laden with dilemmas, paradoxes and tensions. Moreover, each situation is unique and requires a

singular approach. However, we have learned some lessons which can improve the design and implementation of future transition programs.

once but avoiding duplication, and (c) be committed to long-term objectives, not quick-fixes.

RECONCILIATION VS. JUSTICE. A tension exists between getting on with reconstruction and building new lives and bringing those who have committed atrocities to justice. Each society needs to decide how it will address the reconciliation process.

EMPOWERING CIVIL SOCIETY is an important way to inform the design, implementation, and monitoring of transition programs and to buy social patience during this volatile period.

RECOGNIZING THAT CONFLICT IS PART OF SOCIAL INTERACTION and that the challenge is finding nonviolent forms of conflict management and resolution.

In terms of responding to these tensions, *consensus* is emerging in two areas. First, though every society is different and requires its own mix of interventions, there is a need for a broad gamut of confidence-building measures early in the transition process. These include restoration of economic processes (demining), demobilization, reintegration (training, job creation), good governance, human rights, security (neutral police, sound judicial system), democratic institutions, and empowerment of civil society and women. Second, new approaches and techniques are needed. Perhaps most important is the need to mobilize local human and financial resources for peace, and to identify and address demands at the local level.

What are the implications of these lessons and the emerging consensus? At the international level (UN Security Council and Secretary-General), there is a need for preventative actions and early warning systems, and more collaboration between the UN system, governments, and NGOs. Intervention should be limited to situations

where they are deemed necessary and beneficial. At the country level, interventions should (a) reflect local realities and aspirations, (b) be homegrown and bottom-up, (c) be inclusive of political, social and economic institutions, (d) have clear objectives and priorities, (e) be flexible, (f) mobilize not displace local human and financial capital, and (g) be monitorable with distinct indicators.

In more general terms, the participants advocated an *integrated strategic framework* characterized by:

- a coherent and comprehensive approach by all actors;
- partnerships and coordination between the various members of the international community and the national government;
- a broad consensus on a strategy and related set of interventions;
- careful balancing of macroeconomic and political objectives;
- the necessary financial resources.

Perhaps most important, however, is a sense of humility. The international community should not underestimate its level of ignorance as to why conflicts occur and how they can be resolved. Also, the ultimate responsibility lies with the peoples and governments themselves. The international community can only play a supporting role, fostering local institutions, capacity and self-reliance. We have come a long way in our understanding of war-to-peace issues, activities and processes. We are beginning to know *what* needs to be done in general—but the question often remains *how*. The answers are complex and ill-understood at the country level. As stated by a participant at the conclusion of the workshop, what is needed is “less intelligence and more wisdom.”



Wednesday, February 19

*The Carter Center, Atlanta*

5:30pm Opening remarks: Greetings by President Carter and World Bank Vice President Ismail M. Serageldin; discussion of workshop objectives

6:15pm Plenary Discussion: Panel on Peace Negotiations and Demilitarization  
Moderator: Nat Colletta, World Bank  
Panelists: Jean Arnault, United Nations  
Jimmy Carter, The Carter Center

7:30pm Reception for workshop participants

Thursday, February 20

*The Carter Center, Atlanta*

8:30am Continental Breakfast

9:00am Small Group Discussion

10:30am Coffee Break

10:45am Plenary Discussion: Reports from small groups

11:30am Plenary Discussion: Panel on Post-Conflict Governance and Economic Management  
Moderator: Gordon Streeb, The Carter Center  
Panelists: Robert Pastor, The Carter Center  
Nils Borje Tallroth, World Bank  
Ian Bannon, World Bank  
Thomas O. Melia, National Democratic Institute for International Affairs

12:45pm Lunch

2:00pm Small Group Discussion

3:30pm Coffee Break

- 3:45pm Plenary Discussion: Reports from small groups
- 4:30pm Plenary Discussion: Panel on Social and Economic Reintegration of Vulnerable Groups in Transition  
Moderator: Anne Willem Bijleveld, UNHCR  
Panelists: Carlos Boggio, UNHCR Guatemala  
Ian Martin, University of Essex  
Edelberto Torres Rivas, UN Research Institute for Social Development  
Victor Tanner, Creative Associates
- 5:45pm End of day

Friday, February 21

*Ritz Carlton Hotel-Downtown, Atlanta*

- 8:00am Continental Breakfast
- 8:30am Small Group Discussion
- 10:00am Coffee Break
- 10:15am Plenary Discussion: Reports from small groups
- 11:00am Plenary Discussion: Panel on Conflict Transformation, Restoration of Social Capital, and Strengthening of Civil Society  
Moderator: Harry Barnes, The Carter Center  
Panelists: Mamadou Dia, World Bank  
Roger Plant, MINUGUA  
Christopher Mitchell, Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution  
William Partridge, World Bank
- 12:15pm Lunch
- 1:30pm Small Group Discussion
- 3:00pm Coffee Break

*Annex 1*

- 3:15pm Plenary Discussion: Reports from small groups
- 4:00pm Plenary Discussion: Integrated Strategic Planning  
Moderators: Nat Colletta and Gordon Streeb  
Panelist: Margaret J. Anstee
- 5:30pm Closing Remarks

### Group A

Arne Aasheim  
Rodrigo Asturias  
Andy Agle  
Mikael Barfod  
Tahseen M. Basheer  
Anne Willem Bijleveld  
Landrum Bolling  
Hans Brattskar  
Alvaro Colom Caballeros  
Mark Cackler  
David Carroll  
Becky Castle  
Fermina Lopez Castro  
M.S.Kappeyevan de Coppello  
Mamadou Dia  
Ahmed Baba Ould Deida  
Christina Eguizabel  
Mukesh Kapila  
Kari Nordheim-Larson  
Mike Mahdesian  
Dayton Maxwell  
Christopher Mitchell  
Elizabeth Mulbah  
Inga M.W. Nyhamar  
William Partridge  
Pamela Reeves  
Edelberto Torres Rivas  
Timothy Siklo  
John J. Stremlau  
Nils Borje Tallroth  
Engelbert Theuermann  
Sara Tindall

*Facilitator:* Liz McClintock

### Group B

Preeti Arora  
Amadou Ould Abdallah  
Dame Margaret J. Anstee  
Mikihiro Arakawa  
Alejandro Bendana  
Carlos Boggio  
Sumana Brahman  
Horst Breier  
Jason Calder  
Nat Colletta  
Rachel Fowler  
Mike Godfrey  
Bernd Hoffman  
Steven B. Holtzman  
Morris Kaba  
Anders Kompass  
Lisa Kurbiel  
Comfort Lamptey  
Ian Martin  
Thomas O. Melia  
Charles E. Nelson  
Taies Nezam  
Susan Palmer  
Roger Plant  
Pierre Pont  
Chanpen Puckahtikom  
Barnett Rubin  
Jennifer Schirmer  
Gordon Streeb  
Ricardo Stein  
Victor Tanner  
Samuel K. Woods, II

*Facilitator:* Nat Colletta

### Group C

Napolean Abdulai  
Jean Arnault  
Eileen Babbit  
Harry Barnes  
Peter Bell  
Hans-Petter Boe  
Hugh Cholmondeley  
Robert Cox  
Tom Crick  
Adrienne Yande Diop  
Nigel Fisher  
Johanna M. Forman  
Benjamen Jlah  
Markus Kostner  
Krishna Kumar  
Terrence Lyons  
Yuji Miyamoto  
Otto Perez Molina  
Byron Morales  
Joyce Neu  
Jean-Victor Nkolo  
Angel Oropeza  
Famatta Osode  
Vitalino Similox Salazar  
Colin Scott  
Ismail M. Serageldin  
Alejandro Guidi Vasquez  
Christine Wing  
Mark Woodward  
Sally Zeijlon

*Facilitator:* Diana Chigas

Mr. Arne Aasheim  
Regional Adviser for Latin America  
Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Oslo  
NORWAY  
phone: (+47-22) 24 34 48  
FAX: (+47-22) 24 95 80

Mr. Napoleon Abdulai  
Program Officer  
International Alert  
1 Glyn St.  
London SE11 5HT  
UK  
phone: (+44-171) 79 38 383  
FAX: (+44-171) 79 37 975

Ambassador Amadou Ould-Abdallah  
Executive Secretary  
Global Coalition for Africa  
1750 Pennsylvania Ave., NW  
Suite 1204  
Washington, DC 20006  
USA  
phone: (202) 676-0845  
FAX: (202) 522-3259

Mr. Andy Agle  
Director of Operations  
Global 2000  
The Carter Center  
One Copenhill, 453 Freedom Parkway  
Atlanta, GA 30307  
USA  
phone: (404) 420-3850  
FAX: (404) 874-5515

Dame Margaret J. Anstee  
Former UN Under-Secretary-General  
Former Special Representative of the  
Secretary-General to Angola  
c/o Ms. Sirkka Corpel  
UNDP Resident Representative  
1350 Marizqual Santa Cruz  
9072 La Paz  
BOLIVIA  
FAX: (+591-2) 39 13 79

Mr. Mikihiro Arakawa  
Consul  
Consulate of Japan  
Atlanta, GA  
USA  
Phone: (404) 892-2700 Ext. 18  
FAX: (404) 881-6321

Mr. Jean Arnault  
Special Representative of the Secretary  
General to Guatemala  
MINUGUA  
Avenida Las Americas 18-36, Zona 13  
Guatemala City  
GUATEMALA  
phone: (+502) 33 93 431  
FAX: (+502) 36 12 460

Ms. Preeti Arora  
Country Economist for Liberia  
The World Bank Group  
Washington, DC 20433  
USA  
phone: (202) 473-8275  
FAX: (202) 473-8136

Mr. Rodrigo Asturias  
Comandancia  
Unidad Revolucionaria  
Nacional Guatemalteca  
Mexico City  
MEXICO  
phone: (+525) 45 52 943  
FAX: (+525) 60 40 818

Dr. Eileen Babbitt  
Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy  
Tufts University  
Medford, MA 02155  
USA  
phone: (617) 627-3796  
FAX: (617) 627-3712

Mr. Ian Bannon  
Chief Economist Central America  
The World Bank Group  
Washington, DC 20433  
USA  
phone: (202) 473-9042  
FAX: (202) 676-1464

Mr. Mikael Barfod  
Head of Unit  
Policy Analysis and Strategic Planning  
European Community Humanitarian  
Office  
Rue de la Loi 200  
B-1049 Brussels  
BELGIUM  
phone: (+32-2) 295 45 78  
FAX: (+32-2) 299 28 53

Ambassador Harry Barnes  
Director  
Conflict Resolution and Human  
Rights Programs  
The Carter Center  
One Copenhill, 453 Freedom Parkway  
Atlanta, GA 30307  
USA  
phone: (404) 420-5189  
FAX: (404) 420-3862

Ambassador Tahseen M. Basheer  
The National Center of Middle East  
Studies  
1 Saad El Aly Street Apt. 163  
Midan Koulry El-Galaa  
Doukki, Giza  
Cairo  
EGYPT  
phone: (+202) 36 12 029  
FAX: (+202) 36 08 717

Mr. Peter Bell  
President  
CARE  
151 Ellis Street NE  
Atlanta, GA 30303  
USA  
phone: (404) 681-2552  
FAX: (404) 577-5977

Dr. Alejandro Bendana  
Director  
Centro de Estudios Internacionales  
Apartado 1747  
Managua  
NICARAGUA  
phone: (+505) 27 85 413  
FAX: (+505) 26 70 517  
email: CEI@nicarao.apc.org

Mr. Anne Willem Bijleveld  
Regional Representative  
U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees  
Regional office for the U.S. and Caribbean  
Washington, DC  
USA  
phone: (202) 296-5191  
FAX: (202) 296-5660

Mr. Hans-Petter Boe  
Chief of Mission  
International Organization for Migration  
1750 K St., NW  
Suite 1110  
Washington, DC 20006  
USA  
phone: (202) 862-1826  
FAX: (202) 862-1879

Mr. Carlos Boggio  
Chief of Mission  
UNHCR Guatemala  
Guatemala City  
GUATEMALA  
phone: (+502) 339-0463  
FAX: (+502) 332-5982  
email: guagu@unhcr.ch

Dr. Landrum Bolling  
Director at Large for the Balkans  
Mercy Corps International  
2852 Ontario Rd., NW Apt 32  
Washington, DC 20009  
USA  
phone: (202) 518-9466  
FAX: (202) 241-2850

*Annex 3*

Ms. Sumana Brahman  
Assistant Director  
Office of Public Policy and Government  
Relations  
CARE USA  
Washington, DC  
USA  
phone: (202) 223-2277  
FAX: (202) 296-8695

Mr. Hans Brattskar  
Assistant Director General  
Division of Development Cooperation  
Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Oslo  
NORWAY  
phone: (+47-22) 24 36 00  
FAX: (+47-22) 24 95 80

Mr. Horst Breier  
Head, Economics and Environment  
Division  
Development Co-operation Directorate  
Organization for Economic Cooperation  
and Development  
2 Rue Andre-Pascal  
75775 Paris Cedex 16  
FRANCE  
phone: (+33-1) 45 24 90 20  
FAX: (+33-1) 45 24 19 96

Mr. Alvaro Colom Caballeros  
Executive Director  
Fondo Nacional Para la Paz (FONAPAZ)  
A Ave 8-50 Zona 9  
Guatemala City  
GUATEMALA  
phone: (+502) 33 14 155  
FAX: (+502) 33 14 155

Mr. Jason Calder  
Program Coordinator  
Global Development Initiative  
The Carter Center  
One Copenhill, 453 Freedom Parkway  
Atlanta, GA 30307  
USA  
phone: (404) 420-3722  
FAX: (404) 420-5196

Dr. David Carroll Executive Director O Director O Di-40

Ms. Diana Chigas  
Regional Director  
Conflict Management Group  
20 University Road  
Cambridge, MA 02138  
USA  
phone: (617) 354-5444  
FAX: (617) 354-8467

Mr. Hugh Cholmondeley  
Senior Advisor  
UN Development Programme  
United Nations Staff College Project  
10 Waterside Plaza, Apt 36D  
New York NY 10010-2609  
USA  
phone: (212) 889-9473  
FAX: (212) 213-8128  
email: 72762.2646@compuserve.com

Mr. Nat Colletta  
Lead Social Policy Specialist  
Economic Management and Social Policy  
Department  
Africa Region  
The World Bank Group  
701 18th Street  
Room J-2145  
Washington, DC  
USA  
phone: (202) 473-4163  
FAX: (202) 473-7913

Ms. Marion S. Kappeyne van de Coppello  
Director, Conflict Management and  
Humanitarian Aid Department  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Bezuidenhoutseweg 67  
P.O. Box 20061  
2500 EB  
The Hague  
THE NETHERLANDS  
phone: (+31-70) 34 85 001  
FAX: (+31-70) 34 84 486

Mr. Robert R. Cox  
Advisor and Coordinator of Operations  
European Community Humanitarian  
Office  
Rue de la Loi 200  
B-1049 Brussels  
BELGIUM  
phone: (+32-2) 299 94 22  
FAX: (+32-2) 299 11 72

Mr. Tom Crick  
Executive Assistant to the Director of  
Programs  
The Carter Center  
One Copenhill, 453 Freedom Parkway  
Atlanta, GA 30307  
USA  
phone: (404) 420-5156  
FAX: (404) 420-5196

Mr. Ahmed Baba Ould Deida  
Senior Special Advisor to the Director  
General  
UNESCO  
Paris  
FRANCE  
phone: (+33-1) 45 68 2110  
FAX: (+33-1) 45 68 5552

Mr. Mamadou Dia  
Country Director West Africa  
The World Bank Group  
Washington, DC 20433  
USA  
phone: (202) 477-1234  
FAX: (202) 477-6391 or 473-5450

Dr. Adrienne Yandø Diop  
Director of Information  
Economic Community of West  
African States (ECOWAS)  
Lagos  
NIGERIA  
phone: (+234-1) 263-7075  
FAX: (+234-1) 263-7052



### *Annex 3*

Ms. Cristina Eguizabel  
Program Officer  
Human Rights and International  
Cooperation  
Ford Foundation  
320 East 43 Street  
New York, New York 10017  
USA  
phone: (212) 573-4937  
FAX: (212) 599-4584

Mr. Nigel Fisher  
Director, Emergency Division  
UNICEF  
United Nations Plaza  
New York, NY 10017  
USA  
phone: (212) 326-7163  
FAX: (212) 326-7037

Dr. Johanna Mendelson Forman  
Senior Advisor  
Office of Transitional Initiatives  
U.S. Agency for International  
Development  
Washington, DC  
USA  
phone: (202) 647-3990  
FAX: (202) 647-0218  
email: [jmendelson@usaid.gov](mailto:jmendelson@usaid.gov)

Ms. Rachel Fowler  
Assistant Program Coordinator  
Human Rights Program  
The Carter Center  
One Copenhill, 453 Freedom Parkway  
Atlanta, GA 30307  
USA  
phone: (404) 420-5182  
FAX: (404) 420-5196

Mr. Mike Godfrey  
Guatemala Country Director  
CARE International  
Guatemala City  
GUATEMALA  
phone (+502) 239-1139  
FAX: (+502) 239-1166

Dr. John Hardman  
Executive Director  
The Carter Center  
One Copenhill, 453 Freedom Parkway  
Atlanta, GA 30307  
USA  
phone: (404) 420-5151  
FAX: (404) 331-0283

Mr. Bernd Hoffmann  
Head of Division 426  
Emergency and Refugee Aid  
GTZ  
Postfach 5180  
D-65726 Esborn  
GERMANY  
phone: (+49-6196) 79 13 23  
FAX: (+49-6196) 79 71 30 or 79 61 70

Mr. Steven B. Holtzman  
Social Scientist, ENVSP  
The World Bank Group  
Washington, DC 20433  
USA  
phone: (202) 473-3455  
FAX: (202) 522-3247

Mr. Mukesh Kapila  
Senior Humanitarian Aid Adviser  
ODA, UK Foreign Office  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
94 Victoria Street  
London SW1  
UK  
phone (+41-171) 917-0778  
FAX: (+44-171) 917 0502

Ambassador Anders Kompass  
Assistant Under Secretary of State  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Stockholm  
SWEDEN  
phone: (+46-8) 405 1000  
FAX: (+46-8) 723 1176

Dr. Markus Kostner  
Human Resource Economist  
The World Bank Group  
Washington, DC  
USA  
phone: (202) 237-7501  
FAX: (202) 237-7505

Mr. Krishna Kumar  
Policy Program Coordination Bureau  
U.S. Agency for International  
Development  
Washington, DC  
USA  
phone: (703) 875-4964  
FAX: (703) 875-4866

Ms. Comfort Lamptey  
Program Specialist  
UNIFEM  
304 E. 45th St.  
6th Floor  
New York, NY 10017  
USA  
phone: (212) 906-6891  
FAX: (212) 906-6705

Ms. Kari Nordheim-Larson  
Minister of Development Cooperation  
Government of Norway  
Oslo  
NORWAY  
phone: (+47-22) 24 39 26  
FAX: (+47-22) 24 95 88

Ms. Nancy Lindborg  
Senior Program Officer  
Mercy Corps International  
2852 Ontario Rd., NW Apt 32  
Washington, DC 20009  
USA  
phone: (202) 518-9466  
FAX: (202) 518-9465

Dr. Terrence Lyons  
Senior Research Analyst  
The Brookings Institution  
1775 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20036-2188  
USA  
phone: (202) 797-6185 or  
797-6000  
FAX: (202) 797-6004  
email: tlyons@brook.edu

Mr. Mike Mahdesian  
Deputy Assistant Administrator  
Bureau for Humanitarian Response  
U.S. Agency for International  
Development  
Washington, DC  
USA  
phone: (202) 647-0216  
FAX: (202) 647-0218

Dr. Ian Martin  
Fellow  
Human Rights Centre  
University of Essex  
Wivenhoe Park  
Colchester, Essex  
UK  
phone: (+44-1206) 873764  
FAX: (+44-1206) 873627

Mr. Dayton Maxwell  
Senior Advisor, Complex Emergencies  
World Vision Relief and Development, Inc.  
220 I Street, NE  
Suite 270  
Washington, DC 20002  
USA  
phone: (202) 547-3743  
FAX: (202) 547-4834

Ms. Liz McClintock  
Consultant  
Conflict Management Group  
20 University Road  
Cambridge, MA 02138  
USA  
phone: (617) 354-5444  
FAX: (617) 354-8467

*Annex 3*

Mr. Thomas O. Melia  
Senior Associate  
National Democratic Institute  
for International Affairs

Mr. Angel Oropeza  
Chief of Section for Humanitarian  
Operations  
Regional Bureau for Latin America  
International Organization on Migration  
Geneva  
SWITZERLAND  
phone: (+412) 2717 9261  
FAX: (+412) 2798 6150

Ms. Susan Palmer  
Senior Advisor, Africa and the  
Near East International Foundation  
for Election Systems  
(IFES)  
1101 15th Street, N.W., 3rd Floor  
Washington, DC 20006  
USA  
phone (202) 828-8507  
FAX: (202) 452-0804  
email susan@ifes.org

Dr. Robert Pastor  
Fellow and Director  
Latin American and Caribbean Program  
The Carter Center  
One Copenhill, 453 Freedom Parkway  
Atlanta, GA 30307  
USA  
phone: (404) 420-5180  
FAX: (404) 420-5196

Mr. William Partridge  
Chief of Social Division, LAC  
The World Bank Group  
Washington, DC  
USA  
phone: (202) 473-8622  
FAX: (202) 676-9373

Mr. Roger Plant  
Advisor for Indigenous Issues  
MINUGUA  
Avenida Las Americas 18-36, Zona 13  
Guatemala City  
GUATEMALA  
phone: (+502) 339-3431  
FAX: (+502) 361-2460

Mr. Pierre Pont  
Head of Delegation, ICRC  
Regional Delegation for  
the United States and Canada  
2100 Pennsylvania Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20037  
USA  
phone: (202) 293-9430  
FAX: (202) 293-9431

Mr. Jan Pronk  
Minister of Development Cooperation  
The Hague  
THE NETHERLANDS  
phone: (+31-70) 348 4445  
FAX: (+31-70) 348 5310

Ms. Chanpen Puckahtikom  
Assistant Director  
Policy Development Review Department  
International Monetary Fund  
700 19<sup>th</sup> St., NW  
Washington, DC 20431  
USA  
phone: (202) 623-8780  
FAX: (202) 623-4231

Mr. W. Stacy Rhodes  
Guatemala Mission Director  
U.S. Agency for International  
Development  
Guatemala City  
Guatemala  
phone (+502) 331-1541  
FAX: (+502) 331-8885

Dr. Edelberto Torres Rivas  
Director, Guatemala Office  
War-torn Societies Project  
UN Research Institute for Social  
Development  
Guatemala City  
GUATEMALA  
phone: (+502) 337 0611  
FAX: (+502) 377 0304

*Annex 3*

Dr. Barnett Rubin  
Director  
Center for Preventive Action  
Council on Foreign Relations  
58 East 68<sup>th</sup> Street  
New York, NY 10021  
USA  
Phone: (212) 734-0400  
FAX: (212) 517-4967  
email: brubin@email.cfr.org

Mr. Vitalino Similox Salazar  
Executive Secretary  
Conference of Evangelical Churches  
of Guatemala  
7 Avenida  
1-11 Zona 2  
Guatemala City  
GUATEMALA  
phone: (+502) 232 2293 or 082 1121  
FAX: (+502) 232 1609  
email: ciedeg@guate.net

Dr. Jennifer Schirmer  
Fellow, Program in Human Rights Policy  
Pacific Basin Research Center  
JFK School of Government  
Harvard University  
Cambridge, MA  
USA  
phone: (617) 496-2269  
FAX: (617) 496-0063  
email pbrc1@pobox.harvard.edu

Mr. Colin Scott  
Operations Evaluation Department  
The World Bank Group

Mr. Nils Borje Tallroth  
Chief Economist West Africa

*Annex 3*

## *From Civil War to Civil Society*

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*As part of a global workshop series on the transition from war to peace, the World Bank, in collaboration with the Carter Center, held a workshop focusing on Liberia and Guatemala in Atlanta, Georgia between February 19-21, 1997.*

*The Workshop was organized by Nat J. Colletta, Head, War to Peace Transition, Africa Region, the World Bank and Gordon Streeb, Interim Director of Programs, the Carter Center. They were assisted by Markus Kostner, Human Resource Economist, the World Bank, and Sara Tindall, Program Coordinator, Conflict Resolution Program, the Carter Center. Diane Chigas and Liz McClintock of the Conflict Management Group, Cambridge, Massachusetts, facilitated the small group discussions.*

*This report was prepared by Markus Kostner, Taies Nezam, and Colin Scott under the guidance of Nat J. Colletta. It has been reviewed by the Carter Center, the World Bank, and participants from Guatemala and Liberia. The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and participants, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Carter Center, the World Bank, or any of the World Bank's affiliated organizations.*

*Lawrence Mastri provided valuable assistance in the final editing, design, and production of the report. Cover design by Tomoko Hirata.*

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# Preface

**E**nding violent conflict in countries suffering from chronic instability is a prerequisite for sustainable social and economic development. The transition from war to peace, however, is a complex process marked by the need to establish basic security (including disarmament and demobilization), protect the most vulnerable war victims, reintegrate displaced populations, rehabilitate basic infrastructure and productive assets, stabilize the economy, promote transparent and accountable government, restore social capital, and strengthen civil society. In recent years, as the number of countries undergoing violent conflict has increased, a growing number of governments and agencies have become involved in the war to peace transition

process. Hence, lessons and experiences need to be shared on a more systematic basis and support measures synchronized in this relatively new discipline. It is also important to increase collaboration not only among the development community but also between the development community and the peoples and governments of the war-torn societies.

The Atlanta workshop sought to facilitate this process by promoting the exchange of knowledge and experience among politicians, policymakers, and practitioners to (a) build capacity, (b) provide opportunities for collaboration, and (c) improve coordination among

## *From Civil War to Civil Society*

**OBJECTIVE:** Using Liberia and Guatemala as case studies, the workshop sought to enable discussion on resolving conflicts peacefully, facilitating the transition process, and preventing future outbreaks of violence

**ISSUES:** Workshop discussions were organized around four issue areas or modules: (a) peace negotiations and demilitarization, (b) post-conflict governance and economic management, (c) social and economic reintegration of vulnerable groups, and (d) conflict transformation, restoration of social capital, and strengthening civil society.

**ORGANIZATION:** A plenary session and working groups were organized around each module. During the plenary sessions, resource persons with pertinent experience made keynote presentations. Participants and group facilitators then divided into three working groups to discuss the issues raised by the presenters. A workshop coordinator was responsible for the overall organization

