

Resource

Tearfund Peacebuilding DNA

The behaviour and attitudes that we want to shape our peacebuilding work




Foreword

This document emphasises the importance of how we behave when working in situations of violent conflict. Tearfund believes that modelling certain behaviours is essential if we are to see violent conflict transformed in each context. These behaviours act as a sort of DNA within all of our peacebuilding work. This resource describes the key strands of this DNA and then, in an effort to move from concept to practicalities, offers a series of questions to ponder. Exploring these questions will, encourage people to reflect on the way that they do things, ask themselves questions and adjust their behaviour.

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 Front cover photo: Planting a tree during peacebuilding training in Kigali, Rwanda. David Couzens

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Peacebuilding DNA

As we work to address the issues that occur in situations of violent conflict, we know that actions speak louder than words. Our efforts will have little impact if we don't model the values and practices that we are trying to encourage ourselves. We want therefore to embed these values as a form of Tearfund DNA within all of our peacebuilding work. This DNA is formed of 5 strands:

- A focus on relationships
- A readiness to show hospitality
- A willingness to reach out to and welcome those that are different
- A desire to be creative
- A determination to work with and empower local people

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Relationships

At Tearfund we believe that poverty is the result of broken relationships. Addressing the problem of poverty therefore involves addressing broken relationships. Relationships then form the foundation of our response in situations of violent conflict. To model this in our work we will prioritise building relationships and will treasure the relationships that we have. We will ensure that we recruit staff with the right character and aptitude for building relationships. And throughout, we will try to work with people as individuals, valued and valuable in their own right.

Hospitality

We will be welcoming and hospitable. We will offer those who we work with a safe space, a space that does not judge or impose our views on others but that welcomes all participants to come as they are with their own experiences and voices, all with something positive and unique to contribute. In return, we will expect that all respect the identity, voices and experiences of others. We will continually ask ourselves how, practically, we make people feel welcome and valued. We will tune into our own internal prejudices ensuring that there is no implicit conditionality in our relationship with people. We will also ensure that we build a rhythm of rest and reflection into our work, making space and time for people to encounter God.

Reaching out

Where society is divided we will reach out to the other, to people that are not like us, who may not share our beliefs, priorities or way of life. In doing so we will be prepared to be vulnerable, willing to take risks, the risk of being rejected. As we reach out we will do so in a way that doesn't seek to dominate or control but which respects the difference and the individuality of the other. We will be willing to learn and be open to be changed ourselves by the encounter with those that are different.

Being creative

Being trapped in the trauma of the present can limit our horizons, the challenges faced by communities may have been present for many generations and it can be hard to believe that life could be different. We will therefore provide space for people to dream, to be visionary and to identify new ways of being that transcend the barriers and obstacles of the present. We will continually ask ourselves how we are encouraging curiosity and exploration within our work. How open we are to new ways of working and the extent to which we are willing to take a risk, to be flexible enough in what we do to encourage and enable innovation. We need to reflect on whether our dreams are too small, too constricted by the reality of the present and unable to break out of its straightjacket.

Empowering local people

We also recognise that it is often those who have been most affected by violence that have most to offer in terms of healing. In Isaiah 61 the prophet describes Jesus' mission as being to preach the good news, bind up the broken-hearted, proclaim freedom for the captives, release the prisoners from darkness and proclaim the year of the Lord's favour. The passage however goes on and, referring to those who have found that freedom, states:

‘They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendour. They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will “renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations.’

Isaiah 61:3b-4

It is those who have suffered who will be instrumental in the rebuilding and restoration of their communities. It is those who have directly suffered from sexual violence that will be instrumental in bringing healing to others, those who have suffered from the trauma of physical violence that will bring relief, those who have suffered from injustice that will bring justice and those that have experienced the horrors of armed conflict that will build peace. We will therefore focus on supporting and enabling these “Oaks of Righteousness”. We will always look to support and empower those from within the region who are beginning to address the problems of fragility themselves building their physical and emotional capacity.

Embedding this DNA will ensure that our actions support our words as we work to overcome the issues that trap communities in a cycle of fragility and consequent poverty

Questions to ponder

Relationships

- Who is involved in your programme and how are you getting to know them as individuals rather than as targets to be achieved in a logframe? How is the way that you relate to them different from local authority staff or from other NGO staff?
- What are you doing within your programme to show those that you come into contact with that you care about them as individuals? How is this reflected in how you allocate your time when you visit programme areas, beneficiaries or staff? How will they know that you value them? Do you have the right mix of gender and age groups amongst your team to enable you to relate to all groups effectively?
- How do those that you are working with and those who are beneficiaries of the programme think of themselves with respect to the programme. Do they see themselves as being helpless recipients or more as partners or even as clients with real agency and power?
- What emphasis do you place on recruiting staff with the right character and aptitude for building relationships in comparison with their technical skill? Which can be learnt more easily?

Do no harm

- Have you completed a conflict analysis and a conflict sensitivity assessment? Do you understand what divides and what unites different groups and does your programme take these into account?
- What issues or events might cause anguish to those involved in the programme? How can you be sensitive to this during the programme?
- How do you ensure in your recruitment of staff, community mobilisers etc that they understand who are the most vulnerable, have the skills and abilities to reach out and be inclusive and uphold respect, empowerment and safety in all that they do?

Hospitality

- What are you doing to build trust between individuals? How does your programme provide a safe space where people can share their hopes and fears with each other without fear of judgement?
- How do you make people feel welcome and how do you share your space and your resources with people? In what ways do you break down the barriers between being an external NGO and a member of a community?
- Are you imposing your agenda or worldview on others when you bring them together? Is there an implicit conditionality in your relationship with them?
- What are boundaries or principles that you embed to keep spaces 'safe'?
- How are you building a rhythm of rest and reflection into your programme? Where and how are you building in space and time for people to encounter God?

Reaching out

- In what way are you encouraging curiosity, an openness to having your worldview or your preconceptions challenged? How are you encouraging mutual learning and in particular from those who are different? How open are you to really listening to what people on the ground are saying and to letting that shape your thinking and your priorities?

- To what extent are you hiding behind the mask of being the external expert with the answers? To what extent are you prepared to be open, honest and vulnerable?
- How are you reaching out to those who are different? Do you celebrate and respect differences or are your actions encouraging conformity? To what extent are you encouraging people to adopt your values and worldview, squeezing them into your mould?
- What are you learning from those who are different to you? How are you growing and being enriched through your engagement with people? How can you create space in the programme for this sort of sharing to take place?

Being creative

- How are you building space and flexibility into your programming to encourage creativity and innovation? If new ideas or opportunities emerge during the programme are you able to build on these and incorporate them into the programme or are you confined to a rigid template?
- How are you enabling people to dream and to think beyond the immediate constraints that they face, to be able to speak about a different future? What would their vision for the future look like? Are there any actionable steps that could be incorporated into the programme that would move them a step closer to that - even a very tiny step?

Local empowerment

- What is the balance between direct operations and working with and through others? What emphasis are you placing on building enduring capacity in those you work with? Where does this sit in your list of priorities?
- For the geographic region and thematic area in which you are planning to work, who has been most affected by the issues that you are planning to work on? In what way are they involved in the project?
- In what ways are we helping to build their skills, knowledge and experience?
- How are you including partners, local officials and beneficiaries meaningfully in all stages of the programme?

 **‘Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth’**

1 John 3:18

'You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did.'

James 2:22

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