

The Ties That Bind:
**Monitoring and Evaluation
Report of Generations For Peace
Activities in Sri Lanka and Nepal
- Executive Summary -**

Programme
Research

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Research Conducted

In summer 2013, the peace-building organisation Generations For Peace (GFP) commissioned research in Sri Lanka and Nepal. This research presents the findings of fieldwork carried out from 16 August to 7 September 2013 to assess GFP programmes in Sri Lanka and Nepal.

These programmes were evaluated to understand the impact the programmes had had in local communities, the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) capability of GFP's volunteers on the ground, and local understanding of the conflict context and how GFP's activities relate to the conflict.

By using a mix of focus groups, semi-structured interviews, and Participatory Video (PV) techniques with a total of 49 respondents (29 in Sri Lanka and 20 in Nepal), this research combines innovative research techniques – such as PV – with more traditional qualitative techniques such as focus groups and interviews to draw conclusions regarding the three main areas of exploration.

Findings: Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka, at the time of this research (16 to 26 August 2013), GFP staff and local volunteers had just completed a Sport For Peace Training (SPT) to train new volunteers (known as “Delegates”). This training was conducted in preparation for a longer-term Sport For Peace Programme for Youth (SPPY) – aimed at bridging divides between Tamils and Sinhalese – that was to start in Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu in the Northern Province of Sri Lanka later in 2013.

At the SPT, five newly trained Delegates were asked questions to ascertain their understanding of the conflict context. These Delegates were able to provide a clear, precise and focused articulation of the specific local context of their community. They also offered clear and detailed responses to questions asking them how they would bring about change in their communities. While regular programme sessions had not started at the time of this research, the fact that Delegates already had a strong understanding of the conflict context and the theory of change that would inform the programme was a positive sign. In addition, this research demonstrated that Delegates in Sri Lanka could hypothesise ways to measure the change brought about by the upcoming programme, showing that their M&E capacity was reasonable.

With regard to the actual impact of the programme in question, it was only possible to comment on the basis of programme design at the time this research was conducted. PV sessions and interviews with members of the Tamil community demonstrated that mental trauma was an important consequence of previous conflict in the region (especially because eight of eleven Tamils interviewed had been involved in direct combat in Sri Lanka). In contrast, interviews showed that 75 per cent of Sinhalese respondents did not experience conflict in the region in the same way as Tamils did – they now felt safe and secure, as if all conflict was at an end. This mismatch in conflict perceptions was a potential complication that programme organisers needed to be aware of. A further area of concern identified was the causal relation between GFP programmes and programme impact; it was difficult to identify whether the outcomes and impacts in the future would be caused by GFP programme intervention or by other factors, as Delegates in Sri Lanka were engaged with multiple NGO programmes.

Findings: Nepal

In Nepal, fieldwork took place from 26 August to 6 September 2013, seven years after the end of the war between the monarchy and a home-grown Maoist movement, and approximately two months before the start of scheduled elections for a new Constituent Assembly. In Nepal, GFP volunteers were running an Advocacy For Peace Programme (ADPP) aimed at reducing university-level violence by bridging divides among student unions representing opposing political parties. At the time of research, six sessions of the ADPP had been conducted. Research in Nepal focused on the same three elements as research in Sri Lanka: assessing programme impact, M&E capability, and local understanding and relevance of GFP's activities.



In Nepal, focus groups, interviews and PV sessions were conducted with 14 programme participants and six GFP volunteers based in Kathmandu. After identifying a list of conflicts in Kathmandu – including unemployment, drug addiction, sexual harassment, and insecurity – all six volunteers and six of the programme participants agreed that “political instability” was the most important problem faced in their community, showing that GFP programmes were targeting an important and locally relevant conflict in Kathmandu. While the conflict that was being addressed was very clear, the theory of change that informed the programme was not as clearly outlined: GFP volunteers felt the programme was achieving different ends compared to the individuals who were participating in it. This had implications for the M&E capability of GFP volunteers; while five of six Delegates mentioned the importance of informal feedback sessions and data collection, Delegates were not immediately able to point out specific indicators that could measure change during the programme. This report concludes that at the start of the programme, while GFP volunteers were aware of the importance of monitoring and evaluating the effects of the ADPP in Kathmandu, they were not fully equipped to actually carry out a complete M&E process.



With regard to the actual impact of the programme, unlike in Sri Lanka, where a prospective analysis was conducted, in Nepal the researcher had the chance to evaluate an ADPP in Kathmandu that was ongoing at the time of the field visit – though still in its early stages. Two major positives that emerged from this part of the research were high attendance rates for each of the individual ADPP sessions and a positive perception of each of the sessions on the part of both attendees and organisers. Of 14 attendees interviewed, all 14 said that their understanding and awareness of GFP’s message had increased through the programme. On the other hand, there was no evidence to suggest that they experienced an increase in their positive perception of other political parties. In addition, as in the case of Sri Lanka, many of the individuals attending the programme sessions were also part of other extracurricular clubs and activities; as such, it was difficult to fully attribute the changes in their attitudes and behaviour to the GFP intervention alone.

Concluding Remarks

This report concludes by suggesting three broad areas of recommendations for the future.

- First, it is important to conduct independent midline and end-of-programme evaluation visits at both of these field sites. This will balance the M&E conducted by GFP volunteers with external reporting.
- Second, a closer look at conflict histories based on a group’s demographic profile might help create a better programme plan. As seen in Sri Lanka, while the region is officially post-conflict, the traumatic post-war experience for some members of the community means their psychological vulnerability might affect their responses to GFP programming and as such the expected outcomes outlined in the programme’s theory of change.
- Third, the report sheds light on novel tools that can be used to carry out M&E. The report recommends that developing the Participatory Video (PV) methodology as an M&E tool through a more focused curriculum and longer periods of contact can generate valuable data, as well as proving useful in developing a relatively novel M&E methodology. As such, this report provides practical information for GFP programming as well as adding value to the field of M&E as a whole.

About the Summer Field Research Intern

Vishnupriya Das

Vishnupriya Das is post-graduate student at the University of Oxford studying Contemporary India. She holds a Bachelors degree in Human Sciences from St. Catherine's College Oxford. Vishnupriya has conducted research in a wide range of topics from the relationship between mobile-phone technology and empowerment in the global South to the ways in which the internet is influencing the biological basis of empathy. Growing up near the Bangladesh border in India, she has always been fascinated with the practical and ideological struggles that come with experiencing life in a divided land. This has led Vishnupriya to embark on projects that use film and new media as a tool to give a voice to people in conflict-ridden zones and developing countries. In her spare time, Vishnupriya enjoys taking long walks and trying out new food.

About the Summer Field Research

Generations For Peace awards two research grants annually to selected postgraduate students pursuing Masters or Doctorate studies at the University of Oxford. The awardees conduct a field research which takes place during the University's summer vacations. The multi-disciplinary field research is focused on an activity or programme implemented in one or more countries in which Generations For Peace volunteers operate. In terms of outputs, each awardee is expected to provide a full research report focused on the local activity/programme, including a detailed write-up of the research conducted and any practical recommendations for the activity/programme organisers; and a supplementary report with further meta analysis and recommendations for Generations For Peace regarding activity/programme adjustment and opportunities for further research. A key objective of Generations For Peace in supporting research grants is to support knowledge transfer and capacity development therefore, it is also expected that the awardees will use their best endeavours to demonstrate (within the limits of practical context of their particular research situation) some knowledge transfer to and capacity development of the local actors.



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