



Reconciliation After Violent Conflict: A Handbook

Creating trust and understanding between former enemies is a supremely difficult challenge. It is, however, an essential one to address in the process of building a lasting peace. Examining the painful past, acknowledging it and understanding it, and above all transcending it together, is the best way to guarantee that it does not – and cannot – happen again. As we continue our own journey towards peace in South Africa, I commend this handbook to those who struggle for reconciliation in other contexts around the world. I hope that the practical tools and lessons from experience presented here will inspire, assist, and support them in their supremely important task.

(From the Handbook Foreword by Archbishop Desmond Tutu)

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IDEA's vocation is to promote sustainable democracy around the world. This includes attention to the specific challenges of democratization after violent conflict. It may involve the reconstruction of politics and society by national actors, or the temporary stewardship of democracy-building by the United Nations. In these and other contexts, questions of reconciliation – the process of addressing the legacy of past violence and rebuilding the broken relationships it has caused – are the focus of growing international interest. Particularly in societies emerging from violent conflict there is a clear demand for better tools with which to address this most difficult of issues. The International IDEA Handbook *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict* has been designed and produced with this need in mind.

Drawing directly on the experience of people grappling with the problems and legacies of past violence and injustice around the world, the IDEA Handbook presents a range of tools that can be, and have been, employed in the design and implementation of reconciliation processes. Starting from the perspective that there is no single 'right answer' or approach to the challenge of reconciliation, the Handbook presents options and methods available, along with an evaluation of their relative strengths and weaknesses. Overall, the aim is to provide a resource for practitioners and policy-makers to adopt or adapt, as best suits their specific context.

The Handbook offers:

- An explanation of the basic concepts and general principles of reconciliation, and the context within which it takes place.
- An analysis of the people involved at the core of a reconciliation process: the victims and the offenders.
- A description of the key instruments available to those designing reconciliation processes: healing, justice, truth-telling and reparation.
- An assessment, based on comparative international experience, of the strengths, weaknesses and contextual relevance of each of the policy instruments.
- An analysis of the role of the international community in supporting localized reconciliation processes.
- A range of practical case studies - from Cambodia, Guatemala, Northern Ireland, Rwanda, South Africa and Zimbabwe - illustrating the key themes of the Handbook.
- Information on further reading, relevant organizations and useful related websites.

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The full text of the English and French versions of the Handbook are available at:

www.idea.int/conflict/reconciliation/index.cfm

A shortened Policy Summary of the Handbook is also available, in English and Spanish, on the above website.

Print copies of the Handbook can be ordered from IDEA website (www.idea.int) or by e-mail from: info@idea.int