



# Alliance for Peacebuilding

## ***2012 Annual Conference Peacebuilding 2.0: Managing Complexity and Working Across Silos***

### **Bridging the Genocide Prevention and Conflict Prevention Agendas May 10, 2012**

**Speakers:** Eileen Babbitt, Professor of Practice in International Conflict Management, The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University; Sarah Margon, Associate Director for Sustainable Security, Center for American Progress; Daniel Sullivan, Director of Policy and Government Relations, United to End Genocide; Peter Woodrow, Project Co-Director, Reflecting on Peace Practice Project, CDA Collaborative Learning Projects; Moderators: Melanie Kawano-Chiu, Program Director, AfP (Co-Moderator); and Bridget Moix, Senior Legislative Secretary, Foreign Policy, Friends Committee on National Legislation (Co-Moderator)

#### **Executive Summary**

Despite working toward distinct goals and operating at different times in the conflict life-cycle, there are untapped opportunities for the genocide and conflict prevention communities collaborate on overlapping areas of principle, practice, policy advances and learning, including. The panelists and conference attendees suggested exploring the following areas of joint work to improve the support for and impact of both fields:

#### Policy-Maker Education on:

- Need for both long-term *and* shorter-term prevention programs
- Need for greater alignment in the implementation of the QDDR and the APB
- Ensuring that advocacy efforts regarding specific conflicts propose programs that address the specific root causes of the conflict
- Rigorous training for USG employees on conflict and genocide prevention, early warning signs and indicators, and best practices

#### Joint Learning/Demonstration Initiatives

- Babbitt & Margon white paper on the difference between the two fields
- Exploration of areas of overlap and ideological discrepancies, particularly on differing views of justice, the difference between stopping violence and addressing deeper social change
- Exchange of each field's tools and methodologies in the field and on advocacy
- Examine specific cases (i.e. Liberia, Syria, South Sudan) on what is really needed to prevent mass atrocities or large-scale violence

#### **Session Description**

The US government is taking important steps to improve capacities for genocide prevention and conflict prevention. Through the changes at the State Department emerging from the



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Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR), with the formation of the Atrocities Prevention Board (APB) at the National Security Council (NSC), and new military thinking, conflict and genocide prevention are receiving unprecedented attention. However, genocide and conflict prevention are often viewed as separate arenas of work with distinct approaches, goals, and communities. In this session, genocide and conflict prevention experts discussed the foundational principles of both fields and potential ways to bridge the two fields in support of valuable policy advances, reciprocal learning, and more effective practice.

## Session Overview

There is a need for conflict prevention and genocide prevention agendas to overlap, to be consistent with one another, and to work with one another to help garner lasting change in conflictive environments. Part of the problem is that many of the warning signs that warrant preventative efforts represent ongoing issues and by the time they're recognized it's already too late for effective intervention. Further, when responses to these warning signs are too late, the available actions and tools are greatly fewer than if an earlier intervention took place. Another issue is that while genocide prevention has the "hook" for warranting intervention, the field isn't properly equipped to quell ongoing conflict. Conflict prevention, however, has more mitigating capabilities but doesn't have the "hook" to call for support. The key to correcting for these issues and shortcomings is to identify the areas of overlap, which tools and methodologies are being used, and figure out how the two agendas can work together. Once these areas of overlap are identified, the next step is to implement education and training to people on the ground, working within the field, and people at the top so that these actors can not only know how to deal with these conflicts appropriately, but also learn how to combine and learn from one another's efforts. Combining efforts and learning from one another will allow the peacebuilding community the opportunity to better understand complex conflicts and improve peacebuilding practices.

Conflict prevention evolved from the conflict resolution field, and its efforts are triggered at earlier stages of potential conflict. Whereas the genocide community is mostly based on a human rights paradigm and tends to get involved in its advocacy and awareness raising work at later stages of conflict – usually when violence already has started to occur.

One difference that is particularly challenging is that of impunity and resolution. While the conflict prevention community works to facilitate the end of a violent conflict by interacting with both "perpetrators" and "victims," the genocide community tends to call for legal action to end atrocities and justice for survivors. Thus, bridging the gap between the two communities would, by necessity, require creating new norms and normative stances.

Given the conflict and genocide prevention agendas overlap to some extent, and capitalizing off these areas can contribute to greater impact in both fields. For instance, the panelist agreed that the conflict prevention community could do more to address the "response gap" through more involvement in international advocacy and that the genocide community could start its response programs sooner. Additionally, Peter Woodrow suggested that the two communities could come together for a concrete discussion on the different tools the two fields use and how these tools could be applied and transferred. (In a subsequent conversation with Michelle Farley of Wellspring Advisors, we explored putting this collaboration together in a potential



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violent/genocide context on the ground to make joint work less theoretical. An opportunity to examine and apply overlapping tools for great impact may allow both communities to see the benefits of collaboration in this area.)